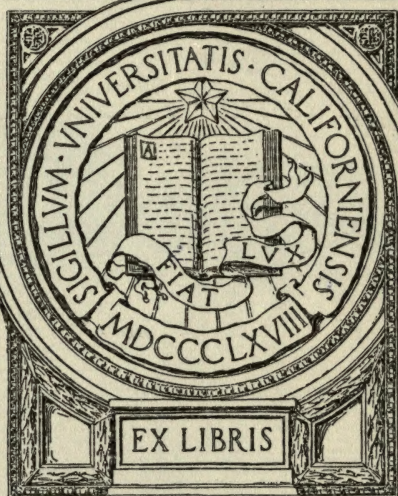




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HOURS

WITH

GERMAN CLASSICS

*FROM THE NIBELUNGENLIED TO  
HEINRICH HEINE*

BY

FREDERIC HENRY HEDGE

*Former Professor of German in Harvard University*

AUTHOR OF "MARTIN LUTHER AND OTHER ESSAYS"  
"THE PROSE WRITERS OF GERMANY," ETC.

NEW EDITION

BOSTON  
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY  
1902

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TO

His Honored Friend,

WILLIAM HENRY FURNESS,

THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSLATOR OF

GERMAN VERSE,

*THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED,*

WITH THE AUTHOR'S LOVE.

919031





## EXPLANATORY NOTE.

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THE following essays contain the substance of lectures delivered by the author in his official capacity as Professor of German Literature. Far from assuming to be a complete history of that literature, they aim to exhibit some of its characteristic phases as exemplified by writers who fairly represent the national genius.

Want of space within the limits of the one volume to which it was judged expedient to restrict this presentation, necessitated the exclusion of many writers of note in prose and in verse, — among others the great philosophers, Kant and his followers, who, though eminently classic, form a class by themselves.

These the author has presented in former publications. See “The Prose Writers of Germany,” and “Atheism in Philosophy, and other Essays.”

F. H. H.

CAMBRIDGE, May 17, 1886.





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# HOURS WITH GERMAN CLASSICS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

THE literature of modern Germany is a recent growth compared with the literatures of England, Italy, France, and Spain. I say *modern* Germany, not forgetting that mediæval Germany led contemporary nations in epic and lyric song.

The English were slow to recognize the merits of German writers when at last it was understood that Germany had writers *in proprio sermone* and a literature of her own.

The Germans were confounded with the people of Holland. The name "Dutch" was applied indiscriminately to the countrymen of Hermann, of the Minnesingers, of Luther, of Guttenberg, and to dwellers on the Waal and the Scheldt. The elder Disraeli, in his "Curiosities of Literature," has an essay entitled "Literary Dutch," in which he speaks of Germans and Hollanders as one and the same people, using the same language: he is not aware of any distinction between them. Vondel, a Dutchman of the sixteenth century, and Schubart, a German of the eighteenth, are adduced as illustrations of the same literature. He writes with a show of candor, but concludes that on the whole the question of Father

Bouhours, "Whether a German can have wit," had not been answered. And this was subsequent to the death of Lessing. It was after Wieland and Klopstock and Herder had nearly finished their labors; after Goethe and Schiller had published things which in their own way have not been excelled. What German critic has ever betrayed such Cimmerian ignorance on any subject of which he undertook to discourse?

A writer in the "Edinburgh Review" for October, 1825, in a critical notice of Carlyle's translation of "Wilhelm Meister," after characterizing that work — which he professes to know only by translation — as "eminently absurd, puerile, incongruous, vulgar, affected, . . . from beginning to end one flagrant offence against every principle of taste and every just rule of composition," passes by an easy induction from the particular to the general, and pronounces the same condemnation on the entire literature of Germany. It is all vulgar; and the reason assigned is that German writers are poor, and therefore debarred the privilege of good society, — that is, of the society of the rich. The fact being that a larger proportion of German writers than of English have been the friends of princes, and that literary genius in Germany has been better sustained on the whole than in England, where, if poverty makes authors vulgar, Burns should have been the most vulgar of poets; where Samuel Johnson was in the habit of subscribing himself *impransus*; where Spenser could testify from his own experience, —

"What hell it is in suing long to bide."

Three years had not elapsed after this tirade when Thomas Carlyle published in the same journal his tri-



umphant vindication of German literature, which marks an epoch in the history of English opinion on that subject. The years succeeding have wrought a mighty change, not in the value of the literature whose best productions antedate that essay, but in the knowledge and appreciation of it by English and American scholars. A certain strangeness, which at first is always repulsive, had to be encountered and overcome before English intelligence could open itself freely to the communications of the German mind.

Every nation that can properly be said to have a literature of its own imparts to that literature something of its own character,—certain qualities due to language, race, historic development, distinguishing it from other literatures, and making it, more than any industrial activities, a true exponent of the national mind. In German literature, accordingly, we shall expect to find, and do find, along with much that is common to all modern, Western, Christian nations, some qualities peculiar to itself.

I name as the first of these qualities a predominant idealism, a tendency to see all things in the light of ideas, to seek in all things the interior reason of their being. “When Candide,” says Heine, “came to Eldorado, he saw some boys in the street playing with great nuggets of gold instead of stones. This extravagance led him to believe that these boys were young princes; and he was not a little surprised when he learned that in Eldorado nuggets of gold were as plentiful as pebbles are with us, so that school-boys can play with them. Something similar happened to a friend of mine, a foreigner, when he first began to read German books. He was amazed at the wealth of thought he found in them;

but he soon discovered that ideas in Germany are as plentiful as nuggets of gold in Eldorado, and that the authors whom he had supposed to be the intellectual princes of the nation were mere ordinary school-boys."

The familiar witticism which represents the German naturalist as undertaking to evolve the image of the camel from his interior consciousness, points to this peculiarity of the national mind, — that it works, so to speak, from within outward. Imagination predominates. We are indebted to this peculiarity for that rich treasury of fairy myths and tales of the supernatural which have found such ready welcome in other lands. Motte-Fouqué's "Undine," his "Bottle-Imp," Chamisso's "Peter Schlemihl," Tieck's "Elves," and above all Goethe's "Märchen," are flowers of fiction indigenous to German soil.

Another distinguishing feature of German literature is philosophic criticism, — a province of intellectual activity in which the writers of that country have taken the lead, and hold by universal consent the foremost place. Indeed, the higher criticism, as distinguished not only from verbal corrections and emendation of texts, but even from such judgments of literary merit as those of the English critics of the last century, — criticism that discerns and interprets the innermost principle of a work of art, that divines the spirit and reconstructs the life of the past, — may be said to be an original growth of the German mind. And what a change it has wrought in the intellectual life of our time! What a dawn it has shed on theology, history, literature, art! How differently the great masterpieces of ancient and modern time shine forth! How different the lands and the ages show in its light! German criticism has unfolded the merit and

the meaning of Hellenic art; it has taught us to distinguish between the mythic and the actual in historic records, Biblical and profane. It has enucleated the kernel from the hull, has elicited from ancient fable the secrets intrusted to its keeping, and given us in Japhetic equivalents and scientific form the eternal truths of religion divested of their Semitic envelopment. In this way Lessing, Herder, the Schlegels, Niebuhr, Bunsen, and a host of others have become the mediators of universal culture, the priests of a common humanity, which in various phases and costumes asserts its identity in every land and age.

Cosmopolitan breadth of view, generous appreciation of foreign merit, I must also name as a special grace of the German mind. Conscientiously investigating and thoroughly acquainting itself with the literatures of other nations, it renders full justice to all. Nowhere have the great minds of England, Italy, France, and Spain received such thorough appreciation. And what other nation boasting great wits of its own, among them some of the greatest, has so exalted as have the Germans a foreign genius, and one of a contemporary people? What other nation has enthroned in its Valhalla, supreme over all, a stranger god? In Shakspeare the Germans have recognized — they first among the nations, earlier even than his own countrymen — the chief of poets. “Every literature of the world,” says Carlyle, “has been cultivated by them; and to every literature they have studied to give due honor.” While Homer and Shakspeare “occupy the loftiest station in their poetical Olympus, there is space in it for all true singers out of every age and clime. . . . Ferdusi and the primeval mythologists of Hindustan live in brotherly union with the Troubadours



and ancient story-tellers of the West. The wayward, mystic gloom of Calderon, the lurid fire of Dante, the auroral light of Tasso, the clear icy glitter of Racine, all are acknowledged and revered. . . . The Germans study foreign nations in a spirit which deserves to be imitated. . . . It is their honest endeavor to understand each with its own peculiarities, and participate in whatever worth or beauty it has brought into being. Of all literatures accordingly, the German has the best as well as the most numerous translations."

This was written more than fifty years ago. Other nations since then, and notably the English, have made great strides in the same direction; but the leadership here must be accorded to the Germans.

The principal, or certainly a marked, defect in German literature is its want of rhetorical force, — of free, impressive communication in the way of direct address, whether primarily through the lips or through the pen.

I speak of prose composition. Germany has produced no orators, no speeches of the pulpit or the forum, that have taken strong hold of the popular mind, — no names in this line that can be compared with those of English and French renown.

It has been suggested that the absence of popular assemblies, of an open court, and until lately of a national parliament, is the reason of this deficiency. But Germany has had a pulpit: why not a Savonarola, a Bossuet, a Masillon, a Taylor, a Hall? Able preachers she has had, but — with the exception of Luther, whose rugged but clear, direct, and uninvolved sentences so strongly contrast the utterances of his later countrymen — no great pulpit orator. The ability of her preachers has con-

sisted rather in profundity of thought or piety of sentiment than in forcible speech.

Not German institutions, but the character of the German language, as it seems to me, is chargeable with the want of oratorical power. If it be urged on the contrary that great oratorical gifts would have moulded the language to suit the demands of effective popular address, I shall not dispute the point: I only maintain that taking the language as it is, I find it ill suited to oratorical effect. For many purposes it is the best of modern dialects. Copious and flexible beyond any of the Latin family; indefinitely capable of compounds by simple agglutination; expressive of nice shades of meaning and philosophical distinctions which have no exponent in English, — it forms an apt instrument of transcendental speculation. By the facility with which it yields itself to every variety of metrical form, it is equally adapted to poetic use. The charm of the female rhyme, so limited and often so dearly purchased in English, impossible in French, is the natural method of German verse. But in oratory, in direct address, where short sentences, simple construction, and sharp terminal accent are required to produce the desired effect, the German fails by reason of its polysyllabic character, its involved periods, its clumsy syntax. Here the English, with its prevalence of monosyllables, has an immense advantage. The German separates the parts of the verb, — the auxiliary from the participle; and where a conjunction or relative pronoun comes in, it separates the nominative from the verb agreeing with it, throwing the latter to the end of the sentence, with more or less of secondary matter between. This often gives to the most emphatic word in the sentence a position unfavorable to the best effect. Take the

following sentence from Goethe's "Campaign in France." In English idiom it would read as follows: "During this time I often saw Marshal Broglie, and have since been glad to find the man whose figure had made so good and lasting an impression honorably mentioned in history." Literally rendered according to the order of the words in the original, it reads thus: "During this time have I the Marshal Broglie often seen, and it has me also afterward rejoiced the man whose figure a so good and lasting impression made had in history honorably mentioned to find." "Surely," says a writer in the *Contemporary Review*, "no people with a sense of the art of words would have adopted a mode of writing where sentences, a page in length, are ended by the verb."

In poetry also, of the sort in which the aim is fervid utterance, English verse by its abundance of monosyllables has capabilities which the German wants. In Byron's "Giaour" occur these lines:—

"The cold in clime are cold in blood,  
Their love can scarce deserve the name;  
But mine was like the lava flood  
That boils in Ætna's breast of flame.  
'T is true, I could not whine or sigh, —  
I knew but to obtain or die.  
I die: but first I have possessed;  
And come what may, I have been blest."

Here, in eight consecutive lines, there are but five words which are not monosyllables, and three of the five have the accent on the last syllable. It would be impossible to render these lines into German with the same effect of sound which they have in English. On the other hand, it would be impossible to render smoothly into English verse, preserving the metre and rhyme of the original, some of the finest German lyrics.



The vocal properties and capabilities of the language have been underrated, I think, not only by nations whose speech is of Latin origin, but also by the English, whose language is compounded in nearly equal parts of Latin and German elements. Coleridge undertook to illustrate the phonetic inferiority of the German to the English by comparing the effect on the ear of two words, an English and a German, having the same signification, — *death*; in German, *Tod*. This word, he argues, has a disagreeable sound on account of the loathsome animal (toad) which it suggests. A curious hibernicism! Even if the word in question, *t-o-d*, were pronounced *toad*, as Coleridge supposes, it would not suggest a toad to those who use it, since their word for *toad* is quite different. But in fact the word is not pronounced *toad*, but *toadt*.

Unquestionably the German is inferior to the English, as the English is to the Italian, in sonorousness. Whoever has heard at a concert songs in the Italian and in the German, sung by the same singer, must have felt painfully the musical inferiority of the latter. The emperor Julian declared that the singing of their popular songs by the Germans of the Rhine sounded like the crowing and cawing of birds of prey. 'T is not a sonorous language — the excess of consonants forbids; but fine vocal effects are possible in it through the ease with which it forms compounds: e. g. *Windesungestüm*. In Körner's "Prayer before Battle" we have the lines, —

"Wie im herbstlichen Rauschen der Blätter  
So im Schlachtendonnerwetter."

If not orotund like languages of the Latin family, it has softer combinations of sound than any language with which I am acquainted. Take this from Goethe's poem, "Der gefangene Graf," —

“Doch wird ein liebes Liebchen auch  
Der Lilie Zierde loben.”

Or this from Schiller's “Pilger,” —

“Ach kein Steg will dahin führen,  
Ach der Himmel über mir  
Will die Erde nie berühren,  
Und das dort ist niemals hier.”

Native historians of German literature have adopted certain classifications which, so far as the purpose of these essays is concerned, are unimportant, and will not be noticed as characterizing the individual authors of whom I am to speak. The great divisions of ancient, mediæval, or pre-Lutheran, modern and more modern ; the period of full maturity, including Goethe and Schiller and their successors, — these divisions are obvious, and justify themselves to the apprehension of other nations as well as to native Germans. But the subdivisions into what are called “schools,” — the Old Silesian, and the New Silesian, the Swiss, the Saxon, the Prussian Poets' Union, the Leipziger Poets' Union, the Göttingen Circle, the Romantic School, and the Austrian School, — these, with the exception, perhaps, of the Romantic School, have little or no significance for the foreigner. They express local and accidental association rather than intellectual tendency or literary likeness. I shall pay no regard to these, but present in chronological or nearly chronological order, out of the mass of German writers and writings, such as have seemed to me for one or another reason worthy of special note.

First, let us glance at some of the works which have come down to us in forms of speech now obsolete.

## CHAPTER II.

## ELDEST MONUMENTS.

THE word "Teutonic" — derived from "Teutones," the name of a barbarous people who make their first appearance in history in connection with the Roman General C. Marius, 102 B.C. — has, by a strange mischance, become a synonym for "German." It is not certain that the Teutones were a German tribe. Some authorities suppose them to have been Celts. And yet, proceeding on the former supposition, German writers themselves at one time adopted the fashion of spelling their national designation with a *t* instead of *d*, — Teutsch instead of Deutsch. It was a mistaken etymology. "Deutsch" is not derived from "Teutones," but from the Gothic word "Thiuda," — *a people*. Hence, the adjective "Thiudisc;" whence, in the old High-German, "Diutisc (*th* changing into *d*); thence "Deutisch" contracted into "Deutsch."

If certain ethnologists are right in their identification of the Goths, who figure in the third and fourth centuries of our era, with the Getae, who inhabited the western shore of the Euxine, we may reckon as the earliest known writer in German the Latin poet Ovid,<sup>1</sup> who was banished to Tomi on the Euxine in the year 8 A. D. In his letter to Carinus in the Fourth Book of the "Epistolae

<sup>1</sup> See Taylor's "Survey of German Poetry."



ex Ponto," he boasts of having written a poem in the Gothic language with Latin metre, —

"Getico scripsi sermone libellum  
Structaque sint nobis barbara verba modis."

Ovid's Gothic verses have not come down to us, but we have what is infinitely better, a work which German philologists unanimously claim as the oldest monument of German literature, — Ulfilas's Gothic version of the New Testament. Says Jacob Grimm, the most diligent investigator of the sources of German speech : —

"There where, according to Thracian tradition, Haemus and Rhodope<sup>1</sup> were petrified into mountains, was heard the earliest German discourse preserved to us in writing. Had not Ulfilas felt in himself the impulse to express in Gothic the sacred words of the new faith, the very foundation of the history of our language would have been wanting. But a small portion of his imperishable work has come down to us; it is impossible to estimate the injury sustained by the loss of the rest. But a happy discovery in our day has enabled us to fill out a considerable gap, and from every line of the text thus preserved we derive fresh gains. No other living European language can boast a monument of equal antiquity and worth."

Ulfilas, or Wulfilas, belonged to that portion of the Gothic race known in history as Visigoths or Westgoths. The word "Goth" is associated in common speech with all that is rude and barbarous. It is to the modern mind what "Scythian" was to the ancient. Indeed, a portion of the Goths have been supposed to be identical with the Scythians inhabiting European or old Scythia, the "Moesia Inferior" of ancient geography. We find

<sup>1</sup> King and queen of Thrace, who, aspiring to divine honors, were turned to mountains.

mention made by the ancients of a people inhabiting that country who bear the name of Getae. They are known to Herodotus, who speaks of them as a Thracian tribe, but distinguishes them as a better variety of that nation, — “*Θρηίκων ἀνδρείοτατοι καὶ δικαιοτάτοι.*” He speaks of “*Γέται ἀθανατίζοντες,*” the Getae who deemed themselves immortal, — words of weight, says Grimm, “in the mouth of haughty Greeks who would look upon Thracians as barbarians.” In Greek and Latin comedy, the names *Getas* and *Getae* occur repeatedly as names of slaves. They are supposed to be names of nationalities applied to individuals, — in the same way that the term “Swiss” has been used to denote servants of that nation.

*Geta* has been affirmed to be synonymous with *Goth*. Grimm thinks the evidence irresistible for their identity. If his view is correct, it would follow that long antecedent to the Christian era the Goths were known to the Greeks and Romans as a people inhabiting the countries called Moesia and Dacia, corresponding in modern geography with the province of Bulgaria. It would seem, furthermore, from the typical use of the name *Getas* (*Geta*), in Greek and Latin comedy, that enslaved Goths in those ages, perhaps on account of their fidelity and trustworthiness, were favorite servants.

On the other hand, history presents at the opening of the third century of our era an influx of Goths<sup>1</sup> into Central and Southern Europe from an opposite quarter, — from the Scandinavian peninsula. A portion of these invaders make incursions into Thrace, and finally establish themselves in Dacia, a province ceded to them by the emperor Aurelian in the year 272. Whether these

<sup>1</sup> Called by Latin historians Gothones.

Gothones were the veritable Getae mentioned above,—moving southward and eastward again after a temporary settlement in the north, and returning to the ancient home of their race,—or a wholly distinct people, confounded with the Getae in consequence of the identity of their location, is a question on which authorities differ. Certain it is that the Visigoths are found established in Dacia and Moesia toward the close of the third century. The more powerful kingdom of the Ostrogoths lay to the north and the east of them on the banks of the Borysthenes, now the Dnieper. That the Goths were Germans, a branch of the great Germanic stock, is universally conceded. Their language proves it; it is evidently one of the cognates of modern German speech.

Ulfilas was a Visigoth, a native of Moesia; hence called Moeso-Goth. Philostorgius claims for him a Cappadocian ancestry. Himself a Cappadocian, the historian perhaps desired for his people the reflected glory of a writer so eminent in the annals of the Church. There is, however, nothing improbable in the assertion. The Goths, among other predatory excursions in Asia Minor, are quite likely to have invaded Cappadocia, and to have taken captive some of the natives. Philostorgius asserts that among these captives were ecclesiastics who converted some of their captors, and that one of these was an ancestor of Ulfilas.

It is recorded that a Gothic bishop named Theophilus attended the Council of Nicaea, where he signed the Orthodox creed, nearly half a century before Ulfilas appears upon the stage. The latter may have been the descendant of a Cappadocian captive, but was unquestionably of Gothic birth. The family name Wölfel, of which Ulfilas is the latinization, is certainly German.



It was not until near the middle of this century that the learned world had any authentic knowledge of the history of this remarkable man. The way in which that knowledge was obtained is very curious,—one of the instances so common in our time of the unexpected recovery of long-buried literary treasures. A German professor, by the name of Waitz, in 1840 found in the library of Paris a manuscript of the fourth century, containing the strictures of an Arian bishop, Maximinus, on the Council of Aquileja (381). In this manuscript is inserted a life of Ulfilas, by the bishop Auxentius of Dorostorius, who, when a child, had been committed by his parents to the care of Ulfilas for instruction in the sacred Scriptures. Before this discovery, all that was known of him was that he was a Gothic bishop who translated the Bible into his native tongue. From the manuscript of Maximinus we learn that he was born in 311, was consecrated bishop in 341, and died during a visit to Constantinople in 388, greatly honored and deeply lamented by his people. He translated into his native Gothic, it is said, the whole Bible, with the exception of the books of Samuel and of Kings. These he omitted on account of the frequent fighting recorded in them. His Goths were already quite too fond of that sort of thing; the encouragement of Biblical precedent might stimulate injuriously their native proclivities. He is also, but erroneously, said to have invented an alphabet for his work.

It is an interesting circumstance that this Gothic version of the Scriptures was nearly contemporary with the preparation of that Latin one which, under the name of the “Vulgate,” was for a thousand years the only authorized Bible of Western Christendom, and is still the

Bible *par excellence* of the Romish Church. Saint Jerome, at work upon this Latin version in his cell at Bethlehem in 403 A. D., was surprised by a letter from two Goths, requesting light on certain discrepancies which they had noticed between the Latin and the Alexandrian versions of the Psalms. "Who would believe," he said, "that the barbarous tongue of the Goths would be inquiring about the true sense of the Hebrew original; and that while the Greeks were sleeping, or contemptuous, Germany would be investigating the words of the Holy Spirit?"<sup>1</sup>

The work of Ulfilas was held in high estimation for several centuries by descendants of the Goths in Italy and Spain. As late as the seventh century the language in which it is written was still understood if not spoken. Then it passed out of sight, and all that was known about it, or its author, was the assertion of Greek ecclesiastical historians, — that there was once a bishop of the Goths who had translated the Bible into their vernacular.

Six hundred years went by before, toward the close of the sixteenth century, one Arnold Mercator, an officer in the service of the Hessian Landgrave, William IV., reported the discovery in the Abbey of Werden of a German translation of the Gospels written on parchment. This precious manuscript afterward found its way to Prague, and when the Swedes took Prague in the Thirty Years' War, was seized and transferred to Stockholm. Thence, for reasons and by means unknown to me, it travelled to Holland. There it was purchased by the Swedish chancellor, Count de la Gardie,

<sup>1</sup> Quis crederet ut barbara Getarum lingua Hebraicam quaereret veritatem, et dormitantibus, immo contemnentibus Graecis, ipsa Germania Spiritus Sancti eloquia scrutaretur?

and presented to the University of Upsala in 1669, where it remains to this day. It is inscribed, partly in silver and partly in gold letters, on a purple ground, and is bound in solid silver; hence called *codex argenteus*. It had originally three hundred and thirty leaves, of which only one hundred and seventy-seven remain. It gives the Gospels in a different order from that with which we are familiar, — namely, Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark. This manuscript, dating from the close of the fifth century, when the Ostrogoths had possession of Italy, is the only original one known to be extant which contains any portion of Ulfilas's version. There are five or six others containing small fragments, but these are copies of a later date. The entire version is nowhere preserved; of the Old Testament, only portions of Ezra and Nehemiah.

In a scientific view the value of these fragments, meagre as they are, is immense. The enthusiasm of the philologist has not overrated their import. Without them the knowledge of the oldest branch of German speech would be wanting. The piety of the Visigoth (a name which stands as a synonym for barbarism) has furnished to the science of language — a science of wholly modern growth — a more important contribution than all the scholars of his time. Little did the good bishop, toiling for his wild flock to tame their savageness and to give them those milder manners with which Saint Chrysostom credits them in a sermon still extant, and which he applauds as the fruit of Christian teaching, — little did he dream that a fragment of his work, enshrined in silver, at the distance of fourteen hundred years, would gladden the heart of a plodding *Gelehrte* and stimulate a new branch of human learning.



This is not the only instance in which religion has rendered such aid to science. To the sacred books of the Hindus we are indebted for the preservation of the earliest form of that widespread family of languages from which our own, and those of the greater portion of Europe, are derived. To Christian missionaries we are indebted for our best knowledge of China and the written wisdom of that alien race. And, to cite an example nearer home, an American apostle in the middle of the seventeenth century performed a task in character and purpose the same with that of Ulfilas, but incomparably more difficult. The Goth translated the Bible from a language the acquisition of which was facilitated by all the means and appliances which a civilized dialect with a literature of its own supplies to the learner, into his own familiar tongue. John Eliot turned the same scriptures into a foreign, unwritten, undeveloped language, of which he had known not a word until nearly his fiftieth year, — a language with words of such portentous length, that Cotton Mather said they must have been growing ever since the Tower of Babel; a language having no affinity with any dialect of civilized man. The world's libraries contain no work more brave in its conception, more wonderful in its execution, than Eliot's Indian Bible. The seventeenth century witnessed no feat more arduous than the making of that book.

Curiously enough, it was the first Bible ever printed on this continent, the printing of English Bibles being then a monopoly of the British crown. The race who used the language in which it was written has long since passed from the earth. The language is extinct; this Bible with its accompanying grammar is its only remaining monument. Probably there lives not the man who

can read it without the aid of a translation. But there it is, an imperishable witness of holy zeal and indomitable patience. The end for which piety designed it, — the edification of future generations of Mohicans, — has failed through the failure, undreamed of by Eliot, of the race for whom he toiled ; but like the work of the Visigoth it subserves another end, which its author did not intend, and could hardly have foreseen. As an aid to comparative philology, as a guide to the knowledge of the languages of the aborigines of North America, and through them, it may be, of other dialects of other savage tribes, it renders a service to the cause of science for which the learned in all generations should bless that good man's name.

This, then, is our present interest in the work of Ulfilas, this the claim which these hardly-preserved fragments have on our regard ; they reveal to us, if not the fountain head, for which we must look beyond the Himalaya, yet one of the earliest tributaries of German speech.

And now, to show how much of modern German there is in that old Gothic dialect, here is Ulfilas' rendering of the best-known portion of the New Testament, the Lord's Prayer : —

Atta unsar þu in himinam, Veinai namo þein. Quimai þu-  
dinassus þeins. Vairþai vilja þeins, sve in himina jah ana  
airþai. Hlaif unserana þana sinteinam gif uns himma daga.  
Jah aflet uns þatei skulans sijaima svasve jah veis afletam þaim  
skulam unseraim. Jah ni briggais uns in fraistubnjai, ak lausei  
uns af þamma ubilin ; unte þeina ist þudangardi jah mats, jah  
vulpus, in awans. *Amen.*

Although the Gothic is the oldest form of German speech of which any monuments survive, it would be in

correct to say that modern German is derived originally from the Gothic; both are descended from an earlier tongue, of which no monuments remain. The Scandinavian dialects — the High German, the Low German with its branches, Saxon, Anglo-Saxon, Dutch and Platt-deutsch (German *patois*) and the Frisian — are offspring of the same stock. The more immediate antecedents of the German of to-day are Old High-German, Middle High-German, Low German, and Saxon, a branch of Low German. Of the Old High-German we have a translation and exposition of the Lord's Prayer by an unknown author, near the beginning of the ninth century. The original is in the Royal Library at Munich. A comparison of this with the version of Ulfilas will show how truly the Gothic may claim to be German, and how little progress was made in the development of the language during the space of four hundred years. Here is the first clause : —

Fater unser der ist in himilom, Kaeuaihit uuerde din namo.

In Low German (one of the sources of modern German), or partly in that dialect, is an old heroic poem of the eighth century, of which a fragment has come down to us with the title "Hildebrand and Hadubrand." The story which furnished the material of the poem is as follows : —

Hildebrand, an Ostrogoth, had fled with Dietrich of Bern (Theodoric) before the arms of Odoacer from Italy to the Huns, leaving behind him a wife and an infant son. After an interval of thirty years, during which his enemies, with Odoacer at their head, had been slain in battle, he returns to his native land. Meanwhile his son Hadubrand had grown to be a powerful warrior.

And now, with an accompaniment of armed men, he marches to the border to oppose the entrance of Hildebrand with his followers, whom he takes for enemies. Not knowing him to be his father, he challenges him to single combat. Hildebrand knows his son, and endeavors to dissuade him from the duel. He tells his story, which Hadubrand discredits, insisting that his father is dead, — for so it had been reported by seafaring men who came over the Wendelsee (the Mediterranean). Hildebrand takes from his arm the golden bracelet, the most esteemed ornament of a German warrior, and offers it to propitiate his son. The younger hero disdains the gift, which he boasts he will win with his sword. “Thou art a Hun;” he says, “a cunning Hun; thou wishest to mislead in order to slay me.” “Woe!” cries Hildebrand, “now is the day of my calamity come; thirty winters and thirty summers I have roamed an exile, and now will my beloved child hew me with the sword or compel me to be his murderer! Nevertheless, the most cowardly were he of the men of the eastland [the Ostrogoths] who would keep thee from the conflict since thy heart desires it.” Then father and son first hurled at each other their lances of ash, and afterward closed with each other in hand-to-hand conflict, and smote with grim strokes each other’s white shields, until the edges thereof were hacked in pieces by the blows of their swords.

Here, provokingly, this ancient fragment — which, bound in vellum, is still preserved in the library of Casel — ends. But fortunately, for the satisfaction of our curiosity, the sequel has come down to us by another way. After an interval of seven hundred years, during which this remarkable lay may be supposed to have lived an oral life in popular song, its substance, toward the



close of the fifteenth century, was embodied in a new poem, entitled "The Father with the Son," by one Kaspar von der Roen. There we learn that the sexagenarian sire was victor in that unnatural combat. Hadubrand being vanquished, acknowledges Hildebrand for his father, and leads him home to his mother, who is greatly surprised to see the old man, supposed to be dead, led by the hand of her son, and placed at the head of the table. Then Hadubrand discloses to her that the stranger is her husband; and Hildebrand drops, as a token, his golden ring into the cup of his beloved wife.

It is interesting to know that for what remains of the elder poem we are indebted to the literary taste of two monks in the monastery of Fulda. These worthy friars, who found, no doubt, their monastic life hang heavy on their hands, for want of something better to do in the intervals of prayer, engrossed this lay which may have been familiar to them from their earlier secular experience: the one by turns dictating, the other writing on the only material afforded them, — the blank spaces of a prayer-book, of whose devout breathings the author, it is likely, would not have approved as a fit accompaniment, — these secular and partly heathenish heroics.

The verses of this poem are without rhyme, and without even the alliteration which meets us somewhat later as a prominent characteristic of mediæval poetry. They lack, of course, the exact measure of the Greeks and Latins, differing in that so widely from modern verse. Still there is a rhythm, an appreciable rhythm, but no metre. The rhythmical effect is produced by an *arsis*, or lift, which marks the beginning of a verse, and is once or twice repeated, thus distinguishing poetic diction from chance-accented, irregular prose.

There survives in the Low-German dialect a confession of faith and a form of renunciation of the Devil ordered by a council of the Church called by Charles Martel in the eighth century, in which we discern a somewhat nearer approximation to the German, and also to the English of our day. To the same period belongs, moreover, a celebrated poem of which the original is lost, and only a Latin version dating from the earlier years of the tenth century survives. It relates the story of Walter of Aquitaine, his encounter with Günther, king of the Burgundians, and his twelve champions in a narrow pass of the Vosges. They seek to wrest from him the rich treasures which he brought from the Huns, and his betrothed Hildegard whom he had rescued from the hands of Attila. Walter fights these warriors, one after another, in single combat, and, though he loses his right hand in the conflict, overcomes them all, secures his treasures and his bride, reaches his native land, where his nuptials are celebrated with royal festivity, succeeds his father on the throne, and reigns in Aquitania thirty years, a just and beneficent sovereign. If we may trust the enthusiasm of certain philo-German antiquaries, the description of those successive duels, each with different accompaniments and fresh characterization, exceeds everything of later interest in that line, and is not surpassed by Homer himself. Enthusiasm is not always a trustworthy critic; still, one can see that the stuff is good, and the situation well chosen.

Of other writings in the rude German of those distant years, I will only mention the great Saxon epic of the ninth century, — the “*Heliand*,” or “*History of Christ*,” which Vilmar pronounces the most perfect and sublime work that the Christian muse in any age or nation has

produced ; the only real Christian *epos*, and, apart from its Christian contents, one of the most glorious of poetic creations. I confess a mistrust of the eulogy which throws Dante and Milton into the shade. No one as yet, so far as I know, has thought it worth the while to translate this vaunted masterpiece into modern German, or into any modern language ; and the specimen given by the critic whom I have named does not seem to me to justify his encomium.

Within less than half a century after the composition of the “ Heliand ” by an unknown author or authors, — a work which waited six centuries for a publisher, — one Otfrid in Alsace, a Dominican friar, handled the same subject less impressively but more artistically in a poem which is chiefly remarkable as the earliest German poem in rhyme, and as furnishing a model for that kind of verse in later ages.

Of these and other contemporary writings I care not to speak at length, but pass at once over an interval of more than three centuries to the period of the full efflorescence of ancient German classic poetry, — the period of the Nibelungen and the Minnesingers.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE NIBELUNGENLIED.

THE Nibelungenlied, like the Iliad, is an epic in the strictest sense of the term,—a people's *epos* as distinguished from the *epopee*, a word implying artistic creation.

In a loose way we call Virgil's Aeneid an epic; also Tasso's Gerusalemme Liberata, and even Milton's Paradise Lost. But criticism notes a difference in kind between these masterpieces of poetic art and the Iliad. Virgil proposes to himself a narrative poem, of which Aeneas shall be the hero; which shall consist of so many books, and in which such and such characters and incidents shall be embodied. The idea governs and moulds the stuff; it is a work of art. Tasso plans a Christian poem, to glorify Christian manhood, and finds his materials in the first crusade. Milton finds his material outside the actual world, and constructs a poem whose characters are ideas. Obviously the Iliad was generated in no such way. Here was no forecasting, no cunning invention, no fabrication, but simply an arranging by some unknown hand of existing materials; a telling of stories that were current, in such sequence as to form a connected whole. The poem throughout is pure narrative; a presentation of persons and events with no accompanying reflections or ulterior design; the author's personality nowhere appears, and Homer is only a name



for the unity of the compositions to which it is assigned, — a name which throws no light on their origin ; it is the name of an *αοῖδος*, not a *ποιήτης*, — of a singer, not a maker. The Iliad is not a work of art ; was not *made*, in the ordinary literary sense of the term, but grew. Where, when, and how it grew — its true genesis — is a question involved in impenetrable mystery.

The same obscurity envelops the origin of the Nibelungen. Here we have not even the name of a compiler attached to the Sagas, which gathered and rounded by some unknown hand have taken this name.

Critics are divided on the question, whether it is the work of one individual or of several. Lachmann maintained the latter view. Bartsch and his followers incline to the former. Hermann Fischer, in his “*Forschungen über das Nibelungenlied seit Lachmann*,” has propounded the name of Conrad von Kürenberger as the probable author. Scheffel, in his “*Ekkehard*,” adopts this opinion. Kürenberger was one of the Minnesingers of the twelfth century, whose extant verses are composed in the same stanza as that of the Nibelungen. But whoever may have been the author of the poem, as we now have it, can he be regarded only as compiler of pre-existing legends. Lachmann detected, as he thought, twenty distinct poems in the thirty-nine cantos which compose the present work ; the remaining nineteen he supposes were added and intermixed by the compiler, to give unity and wholeness to the poem. The approximate date of the composition is from 70 to 80 of the twelfth century.

Twenty manuscript copies of the original have come to light, but before the invention of printing it had passed into oblivion for three hundred years. The fifteenth

century knew nothing of it, or next to nothing; the sixteenth nothing; the seventeenth nothing. About the middle of the eighteenth, a little more than a hundred years ago, a Swiss-German writer, Bodmer, discovered a manuscript in the library of the Count of Ems, in the Grisons, from which he published the latter half with the title, "Chriemhilde's Revenge." Another Swiss, Müller by name, a teacher in Berlin, published somewhat later the whole poem, with the present title, *Nibelungen*. But the time had not arrived for the right appreciation of this precious relic of the Middle Age. French taste still prevailed, at least in Berlin, and especially at court. There is extant an autograph letter of Frederick the Great, showing how utterly abhorrent from all his views were such productions. "In my judgment," he says, "they are not worth a charge of gunpowder. I would n't have them in my library; I would pitch them out if I found them there." This letter may be seen preserved in a glass case in the public library at Zurich,—a curious proof of the extent to which the Gallomania of that age had infected the literary taste of Germany. With Frederick it was something more than Gallomania; it was positive literary anti-Germanism.

The *Nibelungen* draws its characters and incidents from several distinct Sagas, or cycles of Sagas,—the so-called Frankish, or Siegfried-Saga; the Burgundian, in which Günther and Hagen, Kriemhild and Brunhild, and the city of Worms figure; the Ostrogothic, in which we encounter Dietrich of Bern, who has been identified with Theodoric of Verona; and finally the Hunnish Saga, concerning Etzel, who is recognized as Attila, the redoubtable king of the Huns. The first of these, the Siegfried-Saga, possesses an interest independent

of its connection with the Nibelungenlied. Siegfried<sup>1</sup> is the central figure of German mediæval fable; he bears the same relation to German tradition that Rustam does to Persian, or the Cid to Spanish. In the latter case, it is true, the historical element is firmer and larger, but the mythical element is by no means wanting. Neither is the historical element, we have reason to believe, altogether wanting in Siegfried, although it is impossible to disentangle it from its mythical connections. Given an exceptional character, a person eminent in good or in evil, — a saint, a hero, or an outlaw, — in an age antecedent to the art of printing, and myths will gather around him as naturally as iron filings around a magnet. The fight with the dragon — the critical adventure of Siegfried's youth — suggests at once a kindred company of dragon-killers, from Hercules and Rustam to Saint George, and sets the hero in a canon of international mythology. It is a curious and yet unexplained coincidence, that in regions so remote from each other, and with nations so diverse, — Persians, Greeks, Germans, — the dragon fight should be the chief ordeal, and dragon-slaying the sufficing test of heroism. It seems that the dragon was regarded as the symbol of the Powers of Darkness, and the dragon-slayer as approving himself by that act the ally and protégé of the Powers of Light.

Our German hero bears in legendary lore the sobriquet "Horned," — "Der Gehörnte," or, in Old German, "der hürnin Siegfried," — not as being furnished by Nature with the weapons offensive and defensive of a bull or a bison, but as being invulnerable, having a skin

<sup>1</sup> I have preferred to adopt the modern German spelling of this name, instead of the older *Sigfrid*.



as of horn. The legends which recount his achievements and fortunes vary widely, not only in their incidents and images, but in their fundamental conception of the man. There is the Scandinavian and the German Siegfried, — two distinct types. The Scandinavian was formerly thought to be the original, and the German a Christian reflection and modified form of the Northern demigod. But later criticism has established the priority of the German type. The mistake of the old theory appears to have arisen from the circumstance that the Nibelungen, or Niflungen (“children of the mist”), with whom Siegfried allies himself, and who had settled in Worms on the Rhine, originally came from the North, and that the seat of the Nibelungenhort, or treasure of the Nibelungen, which plays so important a part in the poem, is supposed to be Norway. Transferred to the North, the German type took on the characteristics of Northern fable, and Siegfried becomes a mythological monster, divested of the human attributes which endeared him to the milder feeling of the German singers. Judged by modern standards, the character, even in their gentler portraiture, is sufficiently savage.

Siegfried, according to the legends, is the son of King Sigmund and Queen Sigelinde, who dwell at Santen on the Lower Rhine. As a boy he quits his parents in search of adventure, and falls in with a smith named Mimer, with whom he engages himself as an apprentice. But the wonderful strength which he displays in a blow on the anvil, that sinks it into the ground, puts Mimer in terror of his life. So, under pretence of procuring coal for the stithy, he sends his apprentice to a forest where dwells a dragon, through whose assistance he trusts to be released from his troublesome indenture.



The dragon is Mimer's brother in disguise. But though they meet, — the youth and the dragon, — the encounter has not the looked-for result. Siegfried slays the beast, piles trees upon him, and roasts him; anoints himself with the fat of the melted scaly hide, and thereby becomes invulnerable, except in one spot between the shoulders, where his hand could not reach, or where, according to another account, the leaf of a linden tree lodged during the operation. Another miraculous advantage he gained from the victory. In a culinary experiment on the flesh of the monster, tasting of the blood, he found himself suddenly endowed with a knowledge of the language of birds. Said one bird to another: "If Siegfried knew what we know, he would kill Mimer, who will be sure to avenge the death of his brother." Our hero took the hint; he returned to the stithy with the serpent's head in his hand, which he proposed to Mimer, in a somewhat obligatory way, to eat. The smith, to pacify him, offered him a suit of armor bright as silver and hard as steel, a sword (Gram) of irresistible force, and promised to procure for him a steed of wonderful virtue, belonging to a lady of his acquaintance named Brunhild. Siegfried appeared to consent; accepted the armor, was shown the way to Brunhild's castle, and then settled his account with Mimer by cleaving his skull. Arrived at the castle, he found no difficulty in bursting the iron gates with a kick of his foot, and in killing the seven warders with his sword Gram. These lively proceedings interested Brunhild in the youthful stranger. To her inquiry, what had procured her the honor of his visit, he replied by referring to a horse in her stud named Grane, which he would like to possess. Brunhild made no

objection: he might have the steed if the steed could be caught. Twelve of her servants accompanied him to the field where the horse ran wild, and eluded all their efforts to lay hold of him. But when Siegfried approached he came of his own accord, and submitted to the bridle as a horse that knows his master. Siegfried then took leave of Brunhild, — some will have it as her betrothed; but inasmuch as he never claimed her for his wife, German honor rejects the supposition of the broken vow.

Another adventure, which it is impossible to bring into chronological harmony with what has been already narrated, but which has an important bearing on the Nibelungenlied, and is incidentally referred to in that poem, is the acquisition of the fabulous treasure, — the so-called Nibelungenhort, — which happened on this wise. Riding alone one day in the land of the Nibelungen, Siegfried came to the foot of a hill where two princes, Nibelung and Shilbung, were striving for an equitable division of an immense treasure which had just been brought out of a cave, — gold and jewels in such abundance that one hundred wagons coming and going three times a day, for I know not how many days, were insufficient to bear it away. Unable to agree in a satisfactory adjustment of their respective rights, they refer the matter to Siegfried, and make him a present of the good sword Balmung, — which formed a part of the treasure, and which, it seems, was a weapon altogether superior to Mimer's Gram, — if he will undertake the division of the hoard. Siegfried does his best; but who can satisfy two greedy princes? They quarrel with his decision, and quarrel with him. They attempt his life; but fortunately he has the Balmung, and with that

he despatches them both, as also the twelve giants their attendants, and a whole army of followers. Then he overcomes Albrich the king of the dwarfs, who it seems has a lien on the treasure, takes from him the Tarn-kappe, or cloud-cloak, which possesses the property of rendering the wearer invisible, and appoints him, on his oath of fidelity, keeper of the treasure, which is taken back to the cave, and to which, it should be stated, there cleaves a curse pronounced by some former possessor, from whom it had been wrested in old mythological time.

Thus the hero has all that hero can reasonably desire. With Grane for a horse, with an invulnerable body, a cloak of invisibility, a sword that will sever a ball of wool floating on the water, and will cleave a mailed warrior through his mail so deftly that he shall not know what has happened to him until he shakes himself and tumbles in pieces,—with these, and a hundred wagon-loads of jewels and gold, he may be regarded as fairly well equipped to encounter the rough chances of an uncertain world.

The Nibelungenlied, in its present form, consists of thirty-nine lays, called *Aventiuren* ("Adventures"), and contains 2459 stanzas of four verses each. The first nineteen lays, in which the scene for the most part is the ancient city of Worms on the Rhine, are occupied with the wooing of Kriemhild by Siegfried, and of Brunhild by Günther, Kriemhild's brother, king of the Burgundians; with the marriages consequent on these wooings, with the strife between the two sisters-in-law, with the treacherous murder of Siegfried at the instigation of Brunhild, with his burial, and the bringing of the

Nibelung hoard to Worms. The second part narrates the marriage of the widowed Kriemhild to the widowed Etzel king of the Huns, her purpose of revenge on the murderer of Siegfried, the invitation of her relatives to the court of Etzel, the journey of the Burgundians thither, the subsequent terrible conflicts between them and their hosts the Huns, and finally the deaths of the principal actors in the story.

The poem opens with a brief statement of the subject-matter, and introduces us at once to the court of the Burgundian princes at Worms. I quote here and elsewhere from Lettsom's translation : —

“ In Burgundy there flourished  
 A maid so fair to see,  
 That in all the world together  
 A fairer could not be:  
 The maiden's name was Kriemhild;  
 Through her in dismal strife  
 Full many a prowtest warrior  
 Thereafter lost his life.”

After the proem, announcing the theme, the story begins with a dream of Kriemhild, whose bodeful import prefigures the doom which the future has in store for her. She dreams of having nursed and trained a young falcon, which was afterwards torn by two fierce eagles. She relates the dream to her mother, Uta, who thus interprets it : —

“ The falcon that thou trained'st  
 Is sure a noble mate;  
 God shield him in His mercy,  
 Or thou must lose him straight! ”

But Kriemhild thinks she is safe from any danger of that sort, for she never means to marry, —



“I'll live and die a maiden,  
And end as I began;  
Nor (let what else befall me)  
Will suffer woe for man,” —

a resolution which holds good till the right suitor comes. The next lay takes us to Netherland,—that is, the country of the Lower Rhine,—to the court of King Sigmund, and describes in glowing verse the wondrous beauty and prowess of young Siegfried, Sigmund's and Sigelinde's son. Siegfried has heard the widespread report of the charms of Kriemhild, and determines, if possible, to make her his wife. Resisting the entreaties of his father and mother, he proceeds with twelve chosen attendants to Worms; makes himself formidable to King Günther her brother, who finds it politic to conciliate the stranger, till Siegfried finally becomes his fast friend, and establishes himself at court, where the nobles, and even the fierce and terrible Hagen, are won to love him. Then the Burgundians are threatened by the allied hosts of the Saxons and Danes, who mean to dispossess them of their kingdom. The king in despair is about to succumb, but Siegfried encourages him, advises resistance, and engages, with an army of only one thousand men, to repel the forty thousand of the invaders. The armies meet, prodigies of valor are performed on both sides; but Siegfried of course is victor, and returns in triumph, bringing five hundred captives, among them the Saxon and the Danish kings Ludger and Ludgast. A splendid festival is arranged to celebrate the victory; and now, for the first time, Siegfried beholds Kriemhild, who had already secretly watched him, and, in spite of her vow, had yielded her heart to the gracious champion. By the advice of Ortwine, the ladies of the court are invited to grace the feast.

“ On from bower advancing  
They came, in fair array;  
Much press was there of heroes  
Along the crowded way,  
Through anxious glad expectance  
To see that beauty rare,  
The fairest and the noblest  
Of the noble and the fair.

“ As the moon arising  
 Out-glitters every star  
 That through the clouds so purely  
 Glimmers from afar,  
 E'en so love-breathing Kriemhild  
 Dimmed every beauty nigh.  
 Well might at such a vision  
 Many a heart beat high.

“Then inly was Sir Siegfried  
Both well and ill repaid;  
Within himself thus thought he,  
‘How could I so misdeem,  
That I should dare to woo thee?  
Sure ’t was an idle dream.  
Yet rather than forsake thee,  
Far better were I dead!’  
Thus thinking, thus impassioned,  
Waxed he ever white and red.

“ So stood the son of Sigelinde,  
In matchless grace arrayed,  
As though upon a parchment  
In glowing hues portrayed  
By some good master’s cunning.  
All owned, and could no less,  
Eye had not seen a pattern  
Of such fair manliness.”

The comparison in this last stanza is notable as indicating the age of the composition. Siegfried is likened to a figure in some illuminated manuscript. The art of

illumination, in which modern painting had its rise, was fully developed about the beginning of the thirteenth century. The miniature pictures in those illuminations, especially in the article of coloring, have often great artistic merit. At a later period, great painters like Cimabue and Giotto did not disdain to employ themselves with such work. There are illuminated manuscripts of a very much earlier date, but they are rare. A writer before the twelfth century would not be likely to refer to them. Hence we conclude that whatever the age of the legends on which the poem is founded, and of parts of the poem itself, that particular passage is the work of a writer who lived in the twelfth century, — the same, perhaps, who gathered the floating fragments, and compiled the work.

“ There stood he, the high-minded,  
    Beneath her star-bright eye,  
His cheek as fire all glowing.  
    Then said she modestly:  
‘ Sir Siegfried, you are welcome,  
    Noble knight and good.’  
Yet loftier at that greeting  
    Rose his lofty mood;  
He bowed with soft emotion,  
    And thanked the blushing fair.  
Love’s strong constraint together  
    Impelled the enamoured pair.”

The fifth lay recounts King Günther’s wooing of Queen Brunhild already mentioned in the Siegfried legend. He has heard of the wondrous maiden, — as renowned for her bodily strength as she is for her riches and peerless beauty, — and thinks that no other woman would suit him so well for a wife. Siegfried endeavors to dissuade him from the rash adventure, in which, accord-

ing to the terms imposed by Brunhild on her lovers, he is to forfeit his life if he does not beat her in hurling the spear, in throwing the stone, and leaping after it. Günther deems it impossible that he should not be a match for any woman in feats of strength, and resolves to make the trial. He entreats Siegfried to accompany him; and the latter consents, on condition that he shall have Kriemhild for his wife. He goes as Günther's servant, and takes with him the Tarnkappe, or cloud-cloak, won from the dwarfs, which not only makes the wearer invisible, but gives him the strength of twelve men. By this means the king appears to win the victory really due to his invisible proxy, and Brunhild reluctantly enough consents to be his wife.

To accept a husband is one thing; to be a dutiful and loving wife is another. Brunhild had agreed per force to be Queen Günther, but could not bring herself to embrace her lord and spouse, or suffer him to embrace her, with conjugal affection. He must keep his distance. So the bridal chamber is converted into a new battle-field, and becomes the scene of a desperate conflict. The Burgundian had somehow, greatly to her astonishment, beat her in casting the spear and hurling the stone; but was he, after all, the stronger of the two? That is a question she will settle at once and forever. The struggle results in her tying him hand and foot, and suspending him by a nail in the wall. In this abnormal position he passed the small hours. In the morning he was taken down and suffered to leave the room.

Not "as a bridegroom coming forth from his chamber and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race," but with a woful look of discomfiture he hurried to Siegfried and made his complaint.



“No sooner came I near her, what did she do but tie  
My hands and feet together, and hang me up on high!  
There like a ball I dangled all night till break of day  
Before she would unbind me. How soft the while she lay!”

Siegfried comforted his friend, and engaged the following night to subdue the haughty maiden, so that ever after she should be his submissive wife.

Accordingly, by means of the cloud-cloak he gained admission to the royal chamber, extinguished the lights, and then, in the darkness of the night, there began between him and the virago — who supposed all the while that she was fighting with her husband — a conflict which threatened at first to be fatal to Siegfried, but ended in giving him a complete victory. She acknowledged herself vanquished, and he took from her finger a ring, which he kept as a trophy of his prowess, and afterward gave to his wife.

Ten years later a quarrel arose between the two queens as to the merits of their respective husbands. Proceeding from one thing to another, as such altercations will, Kriemhild at last discloses the shameful secret of that nocturnal conflict. Brunhild is informed that it was Siegfried, and not Günther, who overcame her virgin resistance, and is shown the ring abstracted from her finger on that occasion, in confirmation of the fact.

It is characteristic of the manners of the time, that when Siegfried heard of his wife's indiscretion he punished her blabbing with corporal chastisement, which she afterward naïvely confesses, and seems to consider as perfectly in order : —

“ ‘ My fault,’ pursued she sadly,  
‘ Good cause had I to rue;  
I for it have far’d badly, —  
He beat me black and blue.

Such mischief-making tattle  
His patience could not brook,  
And for it ample vengeance  
On my poor limbs he took.' "

That Brunhild should thenceforth study to revenge the double insult inflicted by the hands of Siegfried and the tongue of Kriemhild, was inevitable. It was a question not of purpose, but of means. Günther was Siegfried's friend, and too deeply his debtor to be easily drawn into any plot which aimed at his destruction. But Brunhild, although she no longer attempted to govern her husband by strength of arm, was able still, as the stronger nature, to overrule his weak will; and at last she persuaded him, partly by representation of her own wrongs, and partly by the lure of the vast treasure of the Nibelungenhort, which in case of Siegfried's death would come into his possession, to give his aid to a scheme by which the unsuspecting hero was to be entrapped, and either slain in battle or privily made way with. A spurious message was brought to the court purporting to be a threat of invasion from his old enemies, Ludger and Ludgast. Siegfried, as had been foreseen, volunteered to meet and repel the invaders; and an expedition was organized for that purpose. Meanwhile the terrible Hagen, the willing instrument of Brunhild's revenge, contrived to ingratiate himself with Kriemhild, and under pretext of being his protector in battle, wormed from her the secret of Siegfried's weak spot. He was invulnerable except in the one small place between the shoulders. Kriemhild engages, in order to guide Hagen in his office of protector, to indicate the spot by a slight mark on Siegfried's garment. That fatal mark, a small cross, was all that the

traitor required to accomplish his own and his mistress's revenge.

On their way to the battlefield, by Hagen's contrivance, they meet two men who had received their instructions and professed to be messengers from Ludger, stating that he had abandoned his hostile intentions, and desired to be at peace with the Burgundians. So the party returned to Worms. The pretence of a war with Ludger had answered its purpose in frightening Kriemhild, and thus inducing her to disclose the secret which placed her husband in the power of his enemies. Günther next, at the instigation of Brunhild, proposed a grand hunting-party in the Odenwald. Kriemhild, in whose breast a dreadful presentiment of treason had arisen, vainly endeavored to dissuade Siegfried from accompanying it. He goes, and, as usual, plays the foremost part. The thirsty huntsmen stoop to drink of a little stream. Hagen watches his chance, and when Siegfried in his turn prostrates himself to partake of the refreshment, transfixes him with a boar-spear in the vulnerable spot of which he had learned the secret.

“ So the lord of Kriemhild  
Among the flow'rets fell,  
From the wound fresh gushing  
His heart's blood fast did well.  
Then thus amid his tortures,  
E'en with his failing breath,  
The false friends he upbraided  
Who had contriv'd his death.  
Thus spake the deadly wounded:  
' Ay, cowards, false as hell!  
To you I still was faithful,  
I serv'd you long and well.  
But what boots all? for guerdon  
Treason and death I've won;

By your friend, vile traitors,  
Fouly you have done!  
Whoever shall hereafter  
From your loins be born,  
Shall take from such vile fathers  
A heritage of scorn.  
On me ye have wreak'd malice  
Where gratitude was due:  
With shame shall ye be banish'd  
By all good knights and true.' "

The king, who had sanctioned, not instigated, the cruel deed, might repent the treachery perpetrated on a trusting guest and benefactor; but the dark soul of Hagen knew neither pity nor remorse. By his advice, to consummate his vengeance, the hero's body was laid at dead of night before the door of Kriemhild's dwelling. It was the first thing which she beheld when she sallied forth in the morning to early Mass.

The lament for Siegfried, the gorgeous exequies, the one hundred Masses, the three days' and three nights' watching of the dead, are the theme of the next canto. In this connection we have an illustration of the antiquity of the popular superstition that the body of a murdered man will bleed at the approach of the murderer.

After a widowhood of thirteen years, during which the injured queen never ceased to lament her murdered husband, there came a message from Etzel, king of the Huns, then mourning the loss of his wife Hecla, soliciting the hand of Kriemhild in marriage. The second book — or shall we say the second poem — begins with the recommendation of this alliance to King Etzel by his courtiers. He doubts if she will accept a heathen for her husband. This circumstance did seem an objection when the proposal was made to Kriemhild, but was



overruled by Rüdiger, Margrave of Bechlaren, King Etzel's envoy on this occasion, on the ground that Etzel, though not a Christian at that precise moment, had been one formerly for a little while.

Perhaps if she had seen her suitor before accepting his offer, another objection might have been felt, if not confessed. By King Etzel is meant the famous Attila, the savage warrior of the fifth century, whom the Gothic historian Jornandes describes as a monster of ugliness ; of low stature, big misshapen head, and the characteristic features of the Tartar, — broad flat nose and small deep-sunk eyes. But the offer was accepted in spite of the strenuous efforts of Hagen to prevent it ; and Kriemhild travelled in state, under conduct of Rüdiger, through Bavaria and Austria, to the court of the terrible Hun, whose sway extended from France to China, and whom Christendom feared as the scourge of God.

She had lived thirteen years the wife of Attila, twenty-three had elapsed since Siegfried's death, during all which time she had nursed her grief and her wrath. Now when, according to the dates incidentally given in the poem, she must have been at least fifty years old, she resolved to execute her long-cherished scheme of revenge for the murder of her first love. To this end she persuaded her husband to send messengers to Burgundy with an invitation to her brothers and their court to visit her and attend a festival in Hungary. Hagen, mistrusting her motive and foreseeing evil, is strongly opposed to the expedition, but resolves to accompany the royal party when taunted by Gieseler with fears for his personal safety. He, however, persuades Günther to take with them a following of a thousand good knights and nine thousand yeomen by way of protection. When

this army reaches the Danube, there are no means of crossing at the point where they strike the river; and Hagen, who went off alone in search of a ferry or ford, encounters a party of water-nymphs, who predict the destruction of the entire host.

Undismayed by this prediction, he continues his quest, finds a ferryman at last, hails him under a feigned name, and asks to be put across the river. The ferryman, believing him to be the person named,—a friend of Elsy, the lord of that district,—comes at his call, but when he reaches the shore and discovers his mistake, refuses to serve. A quarrel ensues, in which the boatman is killed; and Hagen, equal to every emergency, manages to bring the unwieldy vessel to the place where Günther and his followers are encamped, and to row them across the river.

No sooner was the river crossed than Hagen, to the utter surprise and dismay of his companions, broke the ferry-boat in pieces, and sent the fragments down the stream. “How shall we cross on our return from Hungary?” they asked. “We shall not return,” was the stern reply; “and this is to prevent any cowards among us from attempting to escape their doom.”

At the court of Attila and Kriemhild, the Burgundians are received with the royal pomp befitting such royal guests. Their quarters are assigned to them; the feast is prepared. And now the epic tragedy hastens on to the dire consummation foreshadowed in the opening stanzas, and initiated by the quarrel of two women whose jealousy proves more fatal to their countrymen than the wrath of Achilles to the Greeks. Thenceforth the story is written in blood,—a story in which hatred and despair transcend the ordinary limits of mortal passion; in which

insatiate ferocity uncovers all the hells of human nature, and carnage in its utter ruthlessness becomes sublime. //

The inexorable Kriemhild, who for so many years has nursed her impotent wrath against the slayer of Siegfried, has her enemy now, as she fancies, in her power. Her vengeance aims only at the death of Hagen; but to accomplish that end, when other means fail, she is willing to sacrifice her three brothers and all her kindred and all her people. Her first attempt was made when Hagen and his friend Folker the minstrel, as strong and ferocious as himself, were discovered in close conference with each other apart from their comrades. She had moved the compassion of her attendants by the tale of her wrongs, and sixty knights volunteered to take the life of Hagen on the spot.

By the advice of Kriemhild the number was increased to four hundred. Such a squadron, well armed and weaponed, might be supposed to be a match for two, however gigantic their strength or redoubtable their prowess. Kriemhild thought so, and putting on her crown, she went thus accompanied to confront her enemy, sure of her revenge.

Folker, seeing her approach, suggested to Hagen that they should rise, since after all she was a queen, and was entitled to that respect. "No," said Hagen, "they would think we were afraid." He remained sitting, and across his knees, the more to spite her, he held the sword he had stolen from Siegfried, the wondrous Balmung. She urges her party to fall upon the two; but they stood, eying the two strangers as huntsmen look upon some wild monster of the forest. Four hundred against two, and not one of the four hundred ventured to lead on the attack!



Foiled in that attempt, Kriemhild next sent a company of her warriors to the hall where the Burgundians were lodged, with orders to slay her enemy in his sleep. But Hagen and Folker were keeping watch at the door of the hall, and the intruders, on seeing them, immediately dispersed.

A tournament is held, followed by a grand feast, whose brief merriment goes out in savage wrath and slaughter. Queen Kriemhild had bribed her husband's liegeman Bloedel to make another attempt on Hagen's life; but instead of seeking him in the royal assembly where he was feasting with Günther and his host, the misguided emissary took his followers to the quarters where the yeomen held their carouse, and there found Dankwart, Hagen's brother, who, having been secretly apprised of the plot, was prepared, and when assaulted by Bloedel killed him with a single stroke of the sword. Thereupon the hall was attacked by a body of infuriated Huns; the Burgundians, both knights and yeomen, massacred. Dankwart alone escaping, forces his way through the mob of the enemy. He reaches the palace, and entering the banqueting hall reports the catastrophe to his countrymen. It was just as young Ortlieb, the child of Attila and Kriemhild, was presented to the assembly as the heir of the crown. When Hagen heard the tidings, he exclaimed, with horrible irony, —

“ Now, then, let 's drink to friendship;  
King's wine shall quench our thirst,  
And the young prince of Hungary  
Himself shall pledge us first.”

So saying, he killed the child and threw its head into the mother's lap. With that ghastly act a fearful tumult arose. Etsel and his queen, Rüdiger and one or two



others, were permitted to leave the hall ; then, while the doors were guarded by Folker and Dankwart, the rest of the Huns were massacred by the Burgundians, and their bodies thrown into the court below. But a new band, composed of Danes and Thuringians, pressed forward to avenge the death of Iring, who had challenged Hagen and fallen by his hand. Folker advises his people to give way and suffer them to enter the hall. Once inside, and matched with the Rhenish champions, they are slaughtered to a man. And now the victors, utterly exhausted, longed for rest. The hall was filled with the dead ; beleaguered by the enemy without, there was no escape ; they were prisoners amid the carnage themselves had made ; if they sat at all, they must sit on the bodies of their victims.

A parley was held with the king and queen, and deliverance promised to all but Hagen, on condition that he, the chief offender, should be given up. This the princes declined to do, preferring any fate to what they regarded as an act of foul treachery to their comrade.

Kriemhild, when her terms were rejected, gave orders to set the building on fire, and a horrible scene ensued. The warriors, familiar with the face of death, as envisaged in the heat of action, were now to encounter it in the way of passive endurance, driven into a strait where sword and helmet were of no avail. The hall, protected by walls of stone and vaulted roof, was not consumed ; the warriors did not perish, but suffered such torture from the heat and the thirst engendered by it that they were fain to cool their parched throats with the blood of the slain.

Want of space compels me to omit the scenes which ensue. Günther and Hagen, after a succession of in-

credible atrocities and the slaughter of all their countrymen, are delivered bound into the hands of Kriemhild. Her brother she causes to be beheaded in prison, presents the severed head to Hagen, and then despatches him also with the sword Balmung which he had stolen from Siegfried.

But the queen's triumph was the parting flash that ended her own tempestuous life. Incensed and horror-struck that so brave a warrior should have perished by the hand of a woman, —

“ Hildebrand, the aged,  
Fierce on Kriemhild sprung;  
To the death he smote her  
As his sword he swung.  
Sudden and remorseless  
He his wrath did wreak.  
What could then avail her, —  
The woman's thrilling shriek?

“ There now the dreary corpses  
Stretch'd all around were seen.  
There lay hewn in pieces  
The fair and noble queen.  
Sir Dietrich and King Etzel —  
Their tears began to start;  
For kinsmen and for vassals  
Each sorrow'd in his heart.

“ The mighty and the noble  
Lay there together dead;  
For this had all the people  
Dole and drearihead.  
The feast of royal Etzel  
Was thus shut up in woe.  
Pain in the steps of pleasure  
Treads ever here below.”

## CHAPTER IV.

## COMPARISON OF THE NIBELUNGENLIED WITH THE ILIAD.

A COMPARISON of the Nibelungenlied with the Iliad is one which naturally suggests itself to readers familiar with both poems. The two have some features in common, and there is much in which they differ. They resemble each other in their genesis, in the uncertainty of their authorship, in the evidence of modifications which each must have undergone before assuming its present shape. They resemble each other in their mixture of the fabulous with the historical, or with historic reminiscence. The hero in each poem is invulnerable except in one particular spot. The Tarn-kappe or cloud-cloak of Siegfried is paralleled by the cloud with which the deities of Olympus make their protégés invisible when overmatched by the enemy. The fabulous is most predominant in the Iliad. Not anticipating the Horatian maxim, it abounds in *deus-ex-machina* devices conveniently interposed where natural agencies are inadequate to accomplish the desired end. Such devices are not resorted to in the Nibelungen. There the agencies, if we except the mythical belongings of Siegfried and the mermaids encountered by Hagen, are all natural and human.

The Iliad exhibits a firmer geographical consciousness, a knowledge of localities, which is still more conspicuous in the Odyssey. The Nibelungen knows with

geographical certainty only the two rivers, the Rhine and the Danube, and the city of Worms. But the latter poem exhibits that feeling for nature, for inland nature, which is foreign to the seafaring Greek. The hunting-scene in which Siegfried is treacherously slain, breathes that intense sympathy with woodland aspects and forest life which marks the Germanic genius, and which characterizes the modern romantic spirit as contrasted with the ancient classic.

In both poems woman is the prime motive ; but in the Greek it is woman as passive occasion, in the German it is woman as active force. The two poems resemble each other in the impersonality of their respective authors. Both are prevailingly objective, realistic ; but the Greek surpasses the German in minuteness of detail and elaborate comparison. Every reader of Homer knows how fond and circumstantial are all his descriptions. He is not content to say of a warrior struck down in battle, that he fell like a forest-tree hewn by the woodman's axe. He knows no such generalities ; he does not say tree, but gives the species. The son of Anthemion falls like a poplar which has sprung up smooth in the watery region of a great marsh, and whose branches have grown to the very top, which some fabricator of chariots cuts down with his glittering iron that he may bend the curve of the wheel for an elegant chariot, and which now lies seasoning by the river's side. There is nothing of this circumstantiality in the Nibelungen ; the movement of the poem is too impetuous for such details. Siegfried coloring at the sight of Kriemhild is likened to a glowing figure in an illuminated manuscript, portrayed by the cunning hand of a master. There the description stops ; but when Menelaos in the Iliad is



wounded by the arrow of Pandaros, we read that the purple blood which flows from the wound is as when some Mæonian or Carian woman has stained with scarlet the ivory which is destined to ornament the head-piece of a horse; and it lies in her bower, desired by many riders, but reserved for the decoration of the king, alike the ornament of the horse and the glory of the rider. Such, "O Menelaos, appeared thy well-formed limb stained with blood, and the beautiful ankle beneath."

Sometimes these minutiae, if one may venture to criticise Homer, seem out of place. The poet, speaking in his own name, may extend his comparisons to any length; but the personages he presents, speaking in the heat of emotion, become unnatural when they indulge in such particularities. Hector has taxed Paris with pusillanimity, and upbraided him for disgracing his nation. Paris replies to Hector, "Your heart is as violent as an axe." So far all right; but then he continues, an axe "which pierces the wood wielded by a man who with art hews timber for a ship." Did people in the Homeric time talk in that fashion? Did they in the midst of a hot discussion go off on a side-track of incidental suggestion? If so, they differed from people now-a-days. We have a phrase, "savage as a meat-axe," but those who employ it do not specify the joints which that implement is used to cleave and the customers for whom they are destined.

Both poems delight in acts of valor; the main topic of both is conflict in arms, but the spirit of the *Iliad* is more humane than that of the Nibelungen. If it sings the fierce encounter and describes the wounds which are given and taken, it does not, like its German counterpart, dabble in blood and revel in carnage. There is very little tenderness and very little of domestic affection

exhibited by the characters of the Nibelungen. The parting scene between Siegfried and Kriemhild, her entreaties that he will not join the hunting-party of whose issue she has such gloomy forebodings, are very touching; but how much more so the parting between Hector and Andromache at the Skaian gate, and the tenderness of the warrior for their infant child! In magnanimity, on the other hand, the agreement of Hagen and Folker not to fight against Rüdiger, their former host, presents a fit parallel to the similar agreement between Glaucus and Diomed.

The Nibelungen, on the whole, has greater unity and continuity; and therefore, whatever may have been the history of its composition, whatever fitting and piecing there may have been, whatever compacting of separate parts to make out the thirty-nine "Adventures," taken as it stands it is the more strictly epic of the two. It begins with Kriemhild and ends with Kriemhild; begins with representations of her early life and her family at Worms, and ends with her and their destruction. Its crowning felicity is her marriage with Siegfried; its beginning of woes, the assassination of her husband; its tragic conclusion, the consequences of that crime. On the contrary, the rhapsodies of the Iliad, whose number is made to correspond with that of the letters of the Greek alphabet, while presenting a series of pictures all connected, it is true, with the Trojan war, arrive at no fit conclusion and form no rounded whole.

A further comparison between the Nibelungen and the Iliad is suggested by the social conditions they respectively represent. We observe in the Greek poem, as I have said, a predominance of the supernatural. The war between Achaians and Trojans is a war of the Olympian

deities as well ; they are constantly interfering in the strife, ranging themselves in parties for and against the mortal combatants. Gods and goddesses slip down to the field as occasion prompts ; and so little does their godhead avail them, that not only Aphrodite but Ares himself, the god of war, comes to grief when, descending to the aid of the Trojans, he ventures within reach of Diomed's spear. But, on the other hand, Diomed's valor is the preternatural effect of Athene's aid. In short, we find in that Homeric world a religion childishly naïve, but thoroughly grounded in popular belief and inwrought with all the habits of life.

A beautiful piety pervades the *Iliad*. If Menelaos taxes Zeus with hardness in not granting his prayer, it is only a proof of entire faith in the power of Zeus to do what was asked if so disposed,—as the pious crusaders in their extremity at Antioch charged Christ with ingratitude in letting them starve who were doing so much for him. This childlike piety is wanting in the *Nibelungen*. Religion there appears but incidentally, as where mention is made of Masses at Worms and at Etzel's court. There is nothing like the personal devoutness of Homer's heroes, as seen for example in Hector's prayer for his child ; and the Christian faith is so evidently at variance with the manners of the people, that one sees it to be something foreign, a recent importation, — or, what is more likely, a device which the Christian author or redactor saw fit to graft on the ancient Saga.

As to moral qualities, I have already spoken of the milder character of the Greeks as contrasted with the ruthless ferocity of the Germans. We may also credit them with the virtue, or at least with the practice, of temperance. When Hector declines the cup proffered



him by his mother for fear of its demoralizing consequences,<sup>1</sup> we may suppose him to represent the prevailing sentiment of the Hellenic people. On the other hand, they made little account of female chastity, and seem not to have been very sensitive on the subject of conjugal fidelity. The rape of Helen was a predatory outrage which roused the ire of the princes against its perpetrator and the house of Priam, but did not degrade the victim in the estimation of her countrymen. Here the Germans exhibit a marked superiority, as they do in true respect for womankind. Siegfried takes no disloyal advantage of his victory in that nocturnal encounter with Brunhild, — a continence undreamed of by the Greeks of Homer's time. And so Brunhild's physical prowess, overmatching all masculine adversaries, typifies in a rude way the estimation and high position accorded to her sex by the German races, — a position elsewhere unknown.

In the quality of valor I think it will not be disputed that the heroes of the Nibelungen far excel those of the Iliad. Mr. Mahaffy, in his "Social Life in Greece," has satisfactorily shown that the vaunted courage of the Homeric chiefs "was of a second-rate order;" they ran away when hardly pressed, and cried like babies when things went wrong.

It required, as we have seen, the miraculous aid of Pallas to screw the courage of Diomed to the sticking-point at which we find it in the fifth rhapsody. And the Iliad exhibits no picture of valor like that of Hagen and Folker calmly facing and defying a party of four hundred warriors urged on by Kriemhild to seize and slay them.

<sup>1</sup> Iliad, book vi., v. 263.



A hateful character is Hagen, a monster of treachery and cruelty unequalled by Homer's worst. Yet even in Hagen, the murderer of Siegfried, we see personified one virtue characteristic of those old Germans, — the virtue of loyalty. Utter, unswerving, uncalculating, unconquerable loyalty to sovereign and chief, — loyalty in good and in evil, loyalty that hesitates at no danger, shuns no sacrifice, and shrinks from no crime, — is the source and, according to the judgment of his time, the justification of all that is most repulsive in that devoted, faithful, execrable man. *u*

On the whole, a fair comparison of the two races, as they appear respectively in their native poems, will accord to the German the palm in respect of moral worth. And the virtues in which they excel are precisely those which are most essential to national stability and social well-being. So the event has proved. Greece has given to the world the purest models in poetry and art. She still lives, and will live forever, in the beautiful forms which her plastic genius called into being. She lives in the "tale of Troy divine," in the masterpieces of her tragic Muse; and she will live forever in the wisdom of her schools.

"Earth proudly wears the Parthenon  
As the best gem upon her zone."

Each succeeding generation gives us a new translation of the Iliad and Odyssey. The plays of Sophokles are reproduced in the theatres of Oxford and Berlin and Cambridge. Plato still taxes the learning of the scholiast, and challenges the acumen of the metaphysician. But when it is asked what has become of the people who led and lead the world in philosophy and art, we can only point to an insignificant territory newly wrested

from the grasp of the once despised Scythian, and destined never, it is likely, to become a ruling power among the nations.

But those German races? Greece had already retrograded from her place in the van of human progress, she had delivered up the torch of civilization into stranger hands, when the ancestors of those Burgundians who figure in the Nibelungen were fortifying their burghs against the savages of the Vistula, and when the Saxons and the Alemanni, the Franks and the rest were chasing the aurochs and the elk in the Odenwald and the Black Forest.

When they first appear on the stage of history it is as pestilent invaders of Italian soil. The sagacity of Cæsar saw in them a cloud of danger to the Roman State, which he labored to dispel. But what prophet in the time of Cæsar, or even of Constantine, would have ventured to predict that these barbarians would one day overshadow with their *Kaisermacht* the old Roman world? Or, that in the fulness of time, through their German, Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-American descendants, with a foothold in every continent, they would put a girdle round the earth, and sway the destinies of human kind?

## CHAPTER V.

## GUDRUN AND OTHER MEDIÆVAL POEMS.

THE second great epic of German mediæval literature is Gudrun, a poetic embodiment of certain maritime legends, gathered chiefly from countries bordering on the German ocean. As the Nibelungenlied suggested a comparison with the Iliad, so Gudrun has been likened to the Odyssey. The analogy is fainter in the case of the latter poem, and seems to rest mainly in a certain similarity between the fate of its heroine, separated from her betrothed, and that of Penelope exposed to the importunity of the *μνηστήρες* in the absence of her husband.

The poem consists of three parts. In the first we have the story of Hagen, son of an Irish king, who has been carried by a griffin to a distant island, where he meets with Hilde, an Indian princess, who has been conveyed to the same island in the same way. The two are released from their captivity by a vessel which touches at the island and takes them to Ireland, where they are married when Hagen, after the death of his father, succeeds to the throne. The offspring of this marriage is a daughter named after her mother, Hilde; and the second part of the poem relates her abduction by Horant, a celebrated singer sent to Ireland for the purpose by Hetel, king of Friesland. Horant captivates her by the magic of his song; she accompanies him to Friesland and becomes the bride of Hetel. The third part, which

gives the name to the whole, is the story of the princess Gudrun, the daughter of Hetel and Hilde. She is sought in marriage by Hartmut, son of Ludwig a Norman king, but rejects his suit in favor of Herwig, son of the king of Zealand. They are betrothed, but before the marriage can take place Hartmut, aided by his father, carries her away by force. As they approach the coast of Normandy, and come within sight of the towered city, the old king Ludwig says to her: "See! all this will be yours if you will marry my son." She replies that death shall be her spouse before she will break her troth with Herwig. Whereupon the enraged king seizes her by the hair and flings her overboard. Hartmut springs after and with difficulty rescues her. When they reach the palace, the queen Gerlinde receives her kindly at first, but on her obstinate refusal to wed Hartmut treats her with great cruelty. A born princess, she is compelled to do menial service; she is the drudge of the house, and is sent to wash linen by the seaside.

One day, after years have passed, she is engaged in this task when a vessel approaches the shore. It proves to be one of a fleet commanded by Herwig and her brother Ortwein, who have organized an expedition to avenge her and their own wrongs on the Normans, — so long time had been required to collect a force sufficient to cope with so powerful an adversary! Gudrun and Hildburg, her companion in adversity, are hailed from the ship; inquiries are made, in the course of which a recognition takes place between the two lovers. Herwig might have carried away Gudrun at once; but, no! he says he will not take her by stealth; she shall be the prize of his victory over the enemy! That night his followers surround the castle, and a fearful conflict



ensues. King Ludwig falls by the hand of Herwig; Gerlinde is also slain, having first in her rage endeavored to kill Gudrun, who is saved by Hartmut, and nobly but vainly intercedes for the queen her oppressor. The Normans are overcome, Gudrun marries Herwig; her brother Ortwein weds Ortrun, the sister of Hartmut; and Hartmut, who has behaved nobly, at last receives Hildburg.

I quote from Bayard Taylor's translation the description of Horant's song at the court of Hagen:—

“ Now when the night was ending  
And day almost begun,  
Horant began his singing;  
And all the birds, outdone,  
Were silent in the hedges  
Because of his sweet song.  
And the folk, who still were sleeping,  
When they heard him slept not long.  
Sweetly to them it sounded,  
So loud and then so low.  
Lord Hagen woke and heard it,  
And Hagen's wife also.  
Forth came they from the chamber  
Unto the balcony;  
As the minstrel wished, it happened.  
The Princess, pleased was she,  
The daughter of wild Hagen,  
And her maidens first and least;  
They silent sat and listened  
While the song of the small birds ceased  
That fluttered around the castle.  
And the heroes also heard  
How the Danish minstrel chanted.  
Full sweetly the souls of all were stirred;  
He was thanked by all the women,  
He was thanked by all the men.  
And from those guests of Denmark,  
Out spoke Fruote then:

' Let my nephew leave his singing,'  
 The bold Fruote said,  
 ' To whom may he be bringing  
 This uncouth morning serenade?'  
 Then answered Hagen's heroes,  
 ' Sir, let us know your mind;  
 There's none so sick and suffering  
 But healing he must find  
 In the minstrel's voice that soundeth  
 From his mouth so sweet and true.'  
 Said the king, ' I would to heaven  
 That I myself could sing thus too.'  
 When he had sung three measures,  
 Sung to the end each song,  
 It seemed to all who heard him  
 The time was not too long;  
 Nor had the listeners deemed it  
 A hand-breadth long the while,  
 Though he had kept on singing  
 While one rode may be a thousand mile."

I shall not undertake to discourse in detail of the poets and Minnesingers, and the anonymous poems of this period of German literature, extending from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. I can only indicate the most important of them. Heinrich von Veldeke, author of the "Eneit" (*Aeneid*), a work which borrows its material from Virgil, and in which Aeneas is represented as a mediæval knight; Hartmann von Aue, author of "Erec und Enite," of "Iwein," of "Gregory of the Rock," and "Der arme Heinrich;" Wolfram von Eschenbach, author of "Parzival" and "Titurel;" Gottfried von Strassburg, author of "Tristan und Isolde;" Rudolf von Ems, author of "Baarlam und Josaphat;" Konrad von Würzburg, remarkable for the beauty of his verse and the affluence of his imagery; Kürenberg, to whom Fischer ascribes the authorship of the *Nibelungen*; and

Walther of the Vogelweide, the most eminent of the Minnesingers, a protégé of the Emperor Frederick II. To these we may add the "Reinhart Fuchs" (Renard the Fox) of Heinrich dem Glichesäre, the typical example of what is called the *Thier-epos*, or fable of beasts. It was afterward enlarged by Heinrich von Alkmar in the fifteenth century, and translated into Low German, with the title "Reinke de Fos." In this recast it appears as a satire on the clergy and the secular authorities of the time, and is reproduced in Goethe's "Reineke Fuchs." It expresses with great humor a kind of mediæval pessimism, showing how wicked cunning in this world carries the day against honor and truth.

One of the works which I have named, the "Parzival," by Wolfram von Eschenbach, claims special notice as, next to the Nibelungen and the Gudrun, the most important of the German mediæval poems.

The subject-matter is derived from two principal sources, — the Celtic traditions of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table (the source from which Tennyson has drawn his "Idyls of the King"), and the Spanish Saga of the "Holy Grail."

The order of the Knights of the Round Table, of whom Lancelot of the Lake is the most celebrated, was said to be founded by King Arthur at the suggestion of the enchanter Merlin. The tradition, which has no ascertained historical basis, has furnished the subjects of countless romances. From England it passed over to France, and thence to Germany.

The Holy Grail, or San Graal, was, according to the saga, the vessel which Jesus used at the Last Supper, and which received the drops of blood shed on the cross. It was believed to be endowed with miraculous virtue.

Angels were said to have had charge of it until it was delivered to Titurel, a king's son, who built a tower for its preservation at Salvaterra, in Spain. Titurel established an order of priestly knights, who lived secluded from the world, and whose business it was to guard the sacred trust. They were supposed to be elect of God. The tower which contained the Grail was situated in the midst of an immense forest, and no one without divine aid could find it. If by divine leading a knight arrived at the place, he was bound to inquire after the Grail in order to be elected one of its guardians. If he was too indifferent or too obtuse to make such inquiries, he forfeited that high distinction. Such forfeiture, accordingly, symbolized want of interest in spiritual things. The Knights of the Holy Grail constituted a spiritual order, in contrast with the Knights of the Round Table who represented the glories of secular chivalry.

Tennyson, in his poem of *Sir Galahad*, figures a knight-errant in pursuit of the sacred treasure : —

“ Sometimes on lonely mountain meres  
I find a magic bark;  
I leap on board, no helmsman steers, —  
I float till all is dark.

“ A gentle sound, an awful light!  
Three angels bear the holy Grail;  
With folded feet, in stoles of white,  
On sleeping wings they sail.

“ Ah! blessed vision, blood of God!  
My spirit beats her mortal bars,  
As down dark tides the glory slides,  
And, starlike, mingles with the stars.

“ The clouds are broken in the sky,  
And thro' the mountain walls  
A rolling organ-harmony  
Swells up and shakes and falls.



“ Then move the trees, the copses nod,  
Wings flutter, voices hover clear;  
‘ Oh, just and faithful knight of God!  
Ride on! the prize is near.’

“ So pass I hostel, hall, and grange,  
By bridge and ford, by park and pale,  
All armed I ride, whate’er betide,  
Until I find the Holy Grail.”

Parzival (in English, Percival) is the son of Gamuret, who was treacherously slain in one of the crusades. He was brought up by his mother Herzeleide (“heart-sorrow”) in the seclusion of a dense forest, that he might hear nothing of war and feats of arms. But roaming through the forest one day, when arrived at mature years, he encounters a company of knights splendidly equipped. He attracts their notice, is questioned by them, and advised to repair to the court of Arthur. The hereditary passion for military adventure is aroused in him, and he expresses an intense longing to become a knight. The mother is alarmed, she endeavors to dissuade him; but no entreaties, and no representation of the dangers and hardships of such a life are of any avail. At last, when she finds him inexorably determined, she resorts to an artifice which she hopes will result in discouraging his zeal and defeating his intent. Under pretence of equipping him for his journey she prepares a costume which, unknown to him, is the habit worn by the professional court-fools of the time, and gives him all sorts of false directions. He sets forth, and after a series of striking adventures arrives at the court of King Arthur, then held at Nantes in France. He there distinguishes himself by chivalrous exploits, and is received into the order of Knights of the Round Table. In that character he sets forth in quest of adventures, succeeds in freeing

from her captors a lady named Conduiramar, whom he marries, and finally reaches the castle of the Holy Grail, where his uncle Amfortas, who has been wounded by a poisoned lance, lies confined, awaiting his deliverance, which was to take place whenever a strange knight, unprompted, should of his own accord inquire after the wonders of the castle. But, unfortunately, Parzival had received from an aged knight, Gurnemanz, who was a master of etiquette and learned in the customs of courts, the counsel not to ask questions. Mindful of this advice, he neglects at the decisive moment to make the necessary inquiry, which would have put him in possession of the castle and its treasure, and thus by his stupidity misses the good fortune. Then follows a period of sore trial and probation. The curse which follows the slighting of the Holy Grail pursues him. He is expelled from the circle of the Knights of the Round Table; for four years he wanders in despair, rebelling against God, until at last, on a Good Friday, he falls in with a pious hermit, who reconciles him with God, explains to him the wonders of the Holy Grail, and reveals to him that he is destined to become the king of the castle. Penitent and encouraged, he enters on a new life. In successive combats he overcomes the secular knighthood represented by Gawaine, is received once more into the brotherhood of the Round Table, returns to the castle of the Grail, delivers his uncle, and then, having been purified by suffering, is declared worthy to become king of the Holy Grail by the prophetess who had formerly cursed him.

The incidents of this poem are borrowed mainly from the Provençal, but the German poet has imported into them a mystical and spiritual significance. Parzival's

life-course symbolizes the history of the soul, which in its endeavors after happiness strays and errs, for a time is alienated from God and surrendered to evil, but finally, through repentance and conquest of self and the world, attains to the supreme good.

## CHAPTER VI.

MARTIN LUTHER.

THE sixteenth century consummated the schism in European polity which the fifteenth had initiated ; it separated the German and the Latin races into two distinct households of faith. When, at the Council of Constance in 1414, it was moved and carried that the delegates should vote not as individuals but by nations, each nation having but one vote, a new element was introduced into the ecclesiastical polity of Europe, — the Protestant element of nationality. Until then the Church in the unity of her consciousness, and in her conscious unity, had taken no heed of national distinctions. Europe was ecclesiastically one. There had been in the view of the Church neither German, French, nor English, but one Catholic body, with Rome for its head. Now it appeared that the nation had become a reality and a power in the Christian world.

In the sixteenth century this Protestant element disengaged itself still further from the ecclesiastical whole ; it asserted its independence of Roman dictation. Europe was cloven in twain ; Catholic in the Latin races, and mostly Protestant in those of German kin.

At the head of this movement we encounter two figures, dissimilar in all their qualities and accidents, agreeing only in their anti-papal determination : in England a monarch, the mighty Tudor, standing on his



indomitable will ; in Germany a college professor, standing on his immovable faith.

Martin Luther was born on the 10th of November, 1483. It was the eve of a great revolution in human affairs. Our western hemisphere was yet hidden from European ken behind the waves of the Atlantic ; but in this very year Columbus made his first application to royal power for material aid toward the realizing of his pregnant dream, which nine years later was destined to be realized, that so the new dispensation of Christianity impending with Luther's birth might not want a new world for its unfolding.

There is a law which adapts the man to his time. The work to be done is not laid on a chance individual, but from the foundation of the world the man was found to stand just there, and to do just that. The opportunity does not make the man, but finds him. He is the Providential man. All the past is in him, all the future is to come from him.

The saying that personality is the lever of history was never more fully exemplified in any man than in Luther. A sturdy Saxon nature, Saxon to the core ; reverent, patient, believing, unsuspicious ; easily led when conscience seconded the leading, impossible to drive when conscience opposed. It is noticeable that great reformers, for the most part, have stepped into the blazing focus of their time out of comparative obscurity. No one would have divined in Luther before the age of thirty — least of all would he have divined in himself — the leader of a new age, the founder of a new Church. His boyhood was illustrated by no especial promise, and his school-days were burdened with the usual amount of suffering endured by the boys of the period when educa-

tion was conceived as a kind of rhabdomancy, — a divining and eliciting by means of the rod the hidden virtue in the boyish frame. He cannot forget in after life that fifteen times in one day the rod in his case was so applied. Graduated at Erfurt at the age of twenty-one, he undertakes the study of the law in obedience to the wishes of his father, but is irresistibly driven from it into theology; becomes a monk of the order of Augustine, falls into deep despondency through fears for the welfare of his soul, suffers spiritual agonies in the contemplation of eternal doom, but finds peace at last in the doctrine of forgiveness by free grace, — a doctrine not taught by his church, but learned from the New Testament, then almost an unknown book, of which he had found a copy in the library of the University. We next find him promoted to a chair of Philosophy in the new University of Wittenberg, sent to Rome on business of his Order, amazed to find the capital of the Church a sink of iniquity, but not presuming to lift up his voice in the way of reproof; willing to fulfil all righteousness by mounting on his knees the steps of the Santa Scala, — in the midst of which performance there flashes on his mind, as a rebuke of such works, the saying, “The just shall live by faith.” Returning to Wittenberg, he labors in the quiet discharge of the duties of his office until Tetzel appears with his Indulgences, selling on commission impunity for sin. Then at last his over-strained patience gives way. He nails on the door of the principal church of the city his famous ninety-five theses, exposing the iniquity of that business. And so, on the 31st of October, 1517, Protestantism is born.

Luther had then no thought of seceding from the Catholic Church and founding one of his own. Had

there been the right man in the papal chair there would have been no secession. He meant simply to protest against the fetichism of his time, and to bring the Church back to the truth in Christ. But a controversy had been opened with the Church authorities, not only on this matter of Indulgences but on other questions of Catholic doctrine and discipline as well, which could not be healed; and when at the peremptory demand of the papal legate Cajetan, and again after negotiations with Miltitz and offers of tempting emoluments from Rome, he refused to retract, in 1520 a bull of excommunication was launched against him. That bull he burned in the public square amid applause that, like the embattled farmers' shot at Concord in 1775, was "heard round the world."

The rupture with Rome was consummated at the Diet of Worms, to which in 1521 Luther was summoned to answer for his heresies, and whither, against the urgent advice of his friends he repaired, feeling that the hour had come when he must show himself ready, if need were, to seal his testimony with his blood. His self-communings and prayers which have come down to us show how deeply he felt the import of the crisis, how his heart within him burned as he mused on its issues:—

"Ah, God, Thou my God, stand by me against the reason and wisdom of all the world! Thou must do it; it is not my cause but Thine. For my own person I have nothing to do here with these great lords of the world. Gladly would I have quiet days and be unperplexed. But Thine is the cause, Lord! it is just and eternal. Stand Thou by me, Thou true, eternal God! I confide in no man,—it is to no purpose and in vain. Hast Thou chosen me for this end, I ask Thee? But I know for a surety that Thou hast chosen me."

As a theologian Luther was limited, even bigoted ; more so than most of his associates in the work of reform. He contributed little to theological emancipation and the progress of rational thought. His merit consists in having grasped, as no one before had done, the great truth that sins are not expiated and heaven secured by meritorious works, — still less by money, as the Church in that day would have men believe, reversing the saying of Jesus, and making it easy for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Not works, but faith, — not what a man performs to order, but what he is, — the ground of salvation, was Luther's doctrine.

A man of limited vision, but of boundless faith and, what is equally characteristic, of indomitable courage ! 'T is a fearful thing for a man to pit himself against all the powers that be, backed moreover, in Luther's case, by occasional misgivings and scruples of his own vacillating thought. For however sure he might feel that the Indulgences issued by Leo and farmed by Tetzel could not save souls from the penalties of sin, his right to say so — he, a poor monk, to set up his word against the infallible head of Christendom and all his angels — was not so clear. But Luther's better moments set aside these misgivings as suggestions of the Devil. "How," whispered Satan, "if your doctrine be erroneous ; if all this confusion has been stirred up without just cause ? How dare you preach what no one has ventured for so many centuries ? Are you wiser than popes, bishops, kings, emperors ? Are not all these together wiser than a single poor monk ?" It is a proof of the man's courage that he would not listen to these suggestions, but ascribed them to the Devil, and repudiated them accordingly. In spite of these intrusive voices saying, "You



must not!" a voice behind, more imperative than all, called to him, "You must!" and a courage beyond all martial daring responded "I will!" Here precisely is where a higher power comes in to reinforce the human. When valor in a good cause swells to that pitch, it becomes what the Greeks called *Δαίμων*, — inspiration, God.

Of the existence of a personal Devil he had no more doubt than he had of his own. His vivid imagination, suborning the senses, might sometimes present the fiend in bodily shape. The splash of ink which used to be shown to visitors at the Wartburg may or may not have been Luther's mark; but nothing is more likely than that Luther, with his overwrought brain, had a vision resembling the popular idea of Satan, and hurled his inkstand at the apparition.

The vulgar expression which characterizes certain persons as having a great deal of human nature in them is especially applicable to Luther. There was in him a largeness of nature, a great-heartedness, which manifested itself in generosity and freedom of action, and which has endeared him to young Germany in all succeeding generations. He might have accumulated wealth, — he had abundant opportunities of so doing, — but he chose to remain poor. Before the rupture with Rome, the cardinal legate sent to Augsburg to treat with him had rich livings and high honors to bestow, if the reformer would hold his tongue. And after the rupture, German nobles who sympathized with him sent him presents of costly plate, all which he sold for the benefit of the poor wretches rendered homeless by the breaking up of the monastic establishments. "The world," he said, "cannot pay me for translating the Bible. . . .

I have asked no pay for my books. Not the value of a penny have I asked from my master the Duke of Saxony. The world is not rich enough to satisfy me. The world is but the Decalogue reversed, the Ten Commandments read backward."

The following letter to his lord and patron illustrates the independent spirit and indomitable pluck of the man :

*From a letter to Duke Frederick, Elector of Saxony.*

"Concerning my affairs, most gracious Master, I answer thus : Your Grace knows — or if not, let this certify you — that I have received the Gospel not from man but from Heaven, through our Lord Jesus Christ ; so that I might have boasted and styled myself, as I will henceforth do, an evangelist. That I have submitted to be examined by a tribunal is not because I had any doubts on my own account, but out of excessive humility. . . . But now that I see how my humility tends to degrade the Gospel, and that the Devil is going to usurp the whole space where I have yielded only a hand-breadth, I am constrained by my conscience to do otherwise. I have done enough for your Grace in yielding thus far in your Grace's service. Well does the Devil know that I have not done it from fear. He saw my heart when I entered Worms, how if I had known that there were as many devils opposed to me as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, I would nevertheless have leaped into the midst of them with joy. Now, Duke George is far from being equal to a single devil ; and seeing that the Father of unfathomable mercy has made us through the Gospel superior to all devils and death, and given us the riches of trust so that we dare say to him, 'Father, most beloved of our hearts!' your Grace may judge whether it were not doing the greatest dishonor to such a Father, if we trusted not through Him to be superior to the wrath of Duke George. For myself, I know well that if matters stood at Leipsic as at Wittenberg I would nevertheless ride thither, although, — your Grace shall pardon my foolish speech, — although it should rain nothing but Duke

Georges for nine days running, and each one of them were nine times more violent than this one. He thinks my Lord Jesus to be a man of straw. That, my Lord and I can well endure for a season. . . . I would soon choke Duke George with a word, if that were all.

"I have written this that your Grace may know that I am going to Wittenberg under much higher protection than that of any Elector. Nor have I any thought of seeking protection of your Grace. Yea, I deem that I could sooner protect your Grace than you me. Moreover, if I knew that your Grace would protect me, I would not go at all. . . . And since your Grace desires to know what you are to do in this business, and since you think that you have done far too little, I answer, with submission, that you have already done too much, and that you ought to do nothing at all. For God cannot and will not suffer either your Grace's or my care and management. He chooses that this shall be left to Him, and to no one else. And your Grace has got to behave yourself accordingly. . . .

"Since, then, I will not follow your Grace's counsel, you will be excused before God if I should be taken prisoner and put to death."

Of Luther's freedom of speech we have examples in the *Tischreden* ("Table Talk") recorded by his disciples and friends, who were always about him with their tablets to gather up the fragments that fell from his lips. Very annoying it must have been to the master to be thus dogged and shadowed, to have all his ways observed, all his sayings set in a note-book. But who, even before our latter-day dispensation of the newspaper, could ever escape the reporter? It is related that on one occasion, seeing one of these parasites taking notes, he went to him with a spoonful of the gruel which constituted his frugal supper, and playfully throwing it in his face said, "Put that down too."

The "Table Talk" presents Luther in undress, conversing with his friends in the privacy of his own home on all sorts of subjects, human and divine. It reveals the freedom of speech which his unquestioning faith and long familiarity with sacred things emboldened him to use: "We tell our God plainly, that if He will have a church He must look after it, and maintain and defend it. We can neither uphold nor protect it; if we could, we would come to be the proudest asses under heaven."

A beautiful feature of Luther's character is his love of music. "His songs and hymns," says Mr. Froude, "were the expression of the inmost heart of the German people. Music he called the grandest and sweetest gift of God to man."

Equally German was his love of Nature. He seems to have anticipated that love of Nature so characteristic of our time, and which may be said to be a reminiscence of the old German life of the forest. Generally in Luther's day Nature was looked upon as godless and accursed; but "we are in the dawn of a new era," he said; "we are beginning to think something of the natural world which was ruined in Adam's Fall. We are beginning to see in all around us the greatness and glory of the Creator. We can see the Almighty hand, the Infinite goodness, in the humblest flower."

Luther's national importance as a writer it is impossible to over-estimate. By his multitudinous productions, theological, polemic, didactic, political, — by his hymns, above all by his translation of the Bible, — he conferred on his country the greatest benefit which a people can receive, — the gift of a common language. He established the new High-German as the language of literature for all succeeding time. All the authorities are agreed in



this. All, from the most cautious and conservative to the most radical, even the Catholic, recognize his transcendent merit in this particular.

Jacob Grimm, in the preface to his German grammar, says : —

“ Luther’s language, by reason of its noble, almost wonderful purity, must be regarded as the core and the foundation of the new High-German language from which to this day there have been but very slight deviations, and those for the most part only an injury to its force and expressiveness. The new High-German in fact may be designated the Protestant dialect, whose liberty-breathing nature has, unknown to themselves, overpowered the poets and writers of the Catholic faith. In the irrepressible course of things our language has suffered in its vocal relations and its forms ; but for that which has nourished and rejuvenated its spirit and its body, and has put forth blossoms of a new poesy, we are indebted to no one more than to Luther.”

Rothe says, “ The force of his speech, his power over the minds of the masses, have never been equalled.”

Baumgarten says : —

“ Not only did Luther speak and write German, but his language was a new creation, which sprang from a deep and mighty love of the German people and German ways.”

Ferdinand Christian Baur says : —

“ Every one who has German blood in his veins must recognize in Luther a German man in whom, as in no other, the German nature presents itself in its purest and noblest characteristics. . . . Together with the emancipation of the religious consciousness of the Germans he also ‘ loosed their tongue.’ ”

Gervinus says : —

“ It was in accordance with our modern development that in Germany we conceded to no metropolis, to no learned society,

the honor of fixing our language, but to the man who more than any other . . . was the favorite of the people, who better than any other hit the hearty, forceful, healthy tone of the people. No dictionary of an academy was to be the canon of our tongue, but that book by which modern humanity is schooled and formed, and which in Germany, through Luther, has become as nowhere else a people's book."

David Friedrich Strauss says : —

"We may dispute concerning the idea of a classic writer. I call him a classic in whose writings the deepest idiosyncrasy of his people finds its full expression. . . . Here, Luther takes precedence of all others."

Wackernagel says, "The first name in the history of new High-German literature is Martin Luther."

Friedrich Schlegel, a Catholic, says : —

"Luther forms an epoch not only in the history of the German language through his mastery of the same, but also in the history of European science and intellectual culture."

That Luther was not what is called a fine writer may be taken for granted. The charm of his writing is its naturalness; it is not Art composing, but Nature speaking. A special interest attaches to writings in which we encounter a marked personality. This is the secret of Luther's power. Here is no studied expression, no rhetorical cunning, but the honest, straightforward speech of an earnest soul, — a hearty, robust, naïve simplicity which makes straight its way from the soul to the pen, and establishes a direct communication between the writer and the reader.

Of a brave and generous spirit, few marks are more characteristic than humor; and of humor the subtlest and most pervasive mode is irony. There have been, it

is true, great intellects and great reformers without it. There was not much humor, as I remember, in Plato, except as a reflection of Socrates, — nor in Dante, nor in Leibnitz, nor in Calvin, nor in John Stuart Mill, nor in Channing. But, on the whole, the men who have wrought most beneficently in this human world, with tongue or pen, have had in their mental, or perhaps I should say in their moral, composition, — for the quality is more moral than intellectual, — a spice of humor. A conspicuous example in this kind is Luther. Strange combination, one would say, of the serious, consecrated soul whose consuming fire burned far into the heart of the world, and the gayety which here and there enlivens his page; yet not so strange as at first it might seem. The very friction of care and sorrow in a powerful nature will elicit coruscations of mirth, — as when Hamlet jests with Ophelia, and jests over Ophelia's grave. When the summer cloud hangs heaviest and darkest we look to see flashes along its edge. Abraham Lincoln, with the weight of a nation on his mind, would often indulge in quips and drolleries not over nice; and one seems to feel that without an all-buoyant humor the sad-eyed man could not have ridden the surge of that tempestuous time, but must have gone under in the horrible perplexity which often could see no course to steer and no light to guide. Luther, with the care of a new-born Christendom on his soul, troubled, perplexed, harassed by papists on one side and lawless iconoclasts on the other, must sometimes find vent in laughter, or die.

Contemporary with him was one of the world's great humorists, Erasmus of Rotterdam, the most learned and the most facetious man of his age. Near to each other in time, and nearly related in spiritual emancipation, how

vast the chasm which morally divided the two! With Erasmus, jocoseness was the kernel and core of his being and doing; with Luther, it was only a delicate nimbus that occasionally played around the edges of his grave intent. With him it was the sportiveness of faith; with Erasmus it was the mirth of scepticism, almost of despair. Luther could sometimes laugh; Erasmus did little else. *Moriae Enkomion* ("The Praise of Folly"), thus he entitles one of his characteristic works, in which satire makes merry with the absurdities of the time. Think of writing such a book, with whatever purpose, in that day of folly, whose morrow was the great and terrible day of the Lord, when the elements were about to melt with fervent heat! The book was dedicated to Sir Thomas More, also a man of invincible humor,—humor that sparkled under the executioner's axe. But the brave chancellor—of England's chancellors, almost of England's sons, the bravest and best—was morally incapable of writing such a book. And so was Luther. For him the follies of the world were no joke, but a loathsome, dangerous disease to be purged away by quite other cauterization than that of the sharpest wit. Though with humor richly endowed, he was not a humorist in the technical sense; not a humorist by vocation. It was in him a quality that showed itself mostly in the pleasantries of epistolary intercourse, in the playful irony which enlivens his letters to intimate friends, especially those to his wife,—the loving, simple body, whom he pleases himself by addressing with grand titles, as a person of high distinction: "To her Grace, Lady Catherine Luther, my sweetheart;" "To the deeply learned Lady Katharin Lutherin, my gracious housewife." From Eisleben he writes to the "Doctoress and Self-martyress":—



“DEAR KATE, — Thou wilt still be anxious before thy God, as if He were not almighty, and could not create ten new Dr. Martins if the old one were to drown in the Saale or the Ofen Loch. Leave me in peace with your anxiety. I have a better guardian than you and all the angels. He lies in the crib and hangs on the Virgin’s breast, but sits nevertheless at the right hand of God. Amen ! I think all the world must be emptied of its devils, who all on my account have come together here in Eisleben. Pray, pray, pray ! and help us that we may do well ! The country wine here is good, and the Naumburg beer is very good, except that I think it makes my chest full of phlegm with its pitch. The Devil has spoiled us all the beer in the world with his pitch, and the wine with sulphur. . . . The letters you wrote have arrived, and to-day came the letter you wrote next Friday, together with that of Master Philip. So don’t be impatient. [Dated Sunday after Dorothy’s Day, 1546.]

“Thy dear Lord,

M. LUTHER.”

In a previous letter written from Halle he speaks of a great inundation caused by the rise of the Saale, which prevented his proceeding immediately to Eisleben. It suggests to him the sect of the Anabaptists, or, as we call them, the Baptists, who had given him much trouble :

“DEAR KATE, — We arrived to-day at eight o’clock at Halle, but could not proceed to Eisleben, for there met us a great Anabaptist with billows of water and cakes of ice, deluging the country and threatening us with baptism. For the same cause we could not go back on account of [the overflowing of] the Moldau, but were forced to lie still at Halle between the waters. Not that we thirsted to drink of them ; we took instead good Torgan beer and good Rhine wine, and comforted and refreshed ourselves while we waited till the Saale should have spent her wrath. . . . We would not venture into the water and tempt God. For the Devil is our enemy, and he lives in the water ; and prevention is better than complaint, and there is no reason

why we should give the Pope and his emissaries occasion to rejoice. . . . I think if you had been with us you would have counselled us to do as we have done. Then for once we should have followed your advice."

The following is from his exposition of Psalm ci.:

"In the world it appears that no one is so rude and incapable but thinks that if he were governor he would do great things, and is dissatisfied with all that is done by those who have the rule, — like that slave in Terence's comedy who said, 'Ah, I ought to have been a king!' and as Absalom spoke to the people of Israel, 'Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me and I would do him justice!' These are the master wiseacres who can only criticise others, but when they undertake a thing themselves they are sure to make a botch of it, — as the saying is, 'They that look on and see the game, they can do it better.' They think if they could only get the bowl in their hands they would knock down twelve skittles at once, whereas there are but nine; and when they come to try, they find that there is a way for the ball to run beside the alley. Such people render no praise or thanks; they do not consider that success is the gift of God, and that they ought to pray to Him for it. But they are presumptuous, and fancy that their own reason and wisdom are so competent that they cannot fail; they want to have all the honor and fame for doing better than others, — just as if our Lord God sat up there idle, and were not needed when anything good is to be done! And sometimes He does sit idle, and lets them have their way, — lets the children of men in their presumption undertake to build their tower of Babel; and by and by He comes in and scatters them and brings their devices to nought, so that no one can understand what the other says. And serves them right, because they left God out of their plan, and wanted themselves to be wise as God, and to have the honor which belongs to God alone. . . . Saint Paul says, 'He that plants is nothing, and he that watereth is nothing; but God that giveth the increase.' The children of men do not believe this till they

learn it by experience. If they only consult together, they think the desired result must follow. 'How can it fail,' they say; 'it is as certain as that 7 and 3 make 10.' That is true mathematically; they are right in their calculations. But practically, when it comes to action, it is sometimes found that God can melt down the 7 into 1, or make 1 into 7.

"There sits King or Prince by himself, wise and prudent, and he has hold of the matter by all its five points; then comes a jurist with his book, and finds the law written down so clear and sure that it cannot fail; and after that some big bully, whose head is too small to hold its wisdom, and he finds it in natural equity so firmly grounded, so deeply rooted, that all the world may not overthrow it. Then they ring the bell, — the great bell booms, and comes me a bishop, prelate, theologus, whether self-made or whoever made him; he brings God's word and the Holy Scripture to bear; and then the Devil himself must give in, and allow the cause to be right and just and divine. There they sit, the four pillars of the State, and think they could bear up heaven itself if God should require it of their wisdom! Not one of them looks up and seeks counsel and aid of God; they are either so godless that conscience does not prompt them to pray, or they are so sure of their wisdom and their cause that they forget in their contempt to do so. They think they need nothing, being used to counsel, and are hardened in their unbelief. And so our Lord God must sit idle; it is not for Him to interfere with the counsels of such wise people! And He chats the while perhaps with his angel Gabriel, and says: 'What are those wise folks doing in their council-chamber down there that they do not take us into their counsels? Perhaps they are going to build another tower of Babel. Dear Gabriel, run down, and take Isaiah with you, and privily read them a lecture through their window, and say: "Seeing ye shall not see, hearing ye shall not hear, neither shall ye understand. Conclude your deliberation, and nothing shall come of it; consult together, and it shall not stand. For counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I have strength, saith the Lord."' "

. . . . .



## THEORISTS AND MEN OF PRACTICAL GENIUS.

“God has two sorts of people in the world ; they are found in all ranks. There are some who have a special star before God. He himself teaches and drills them, as He chooses them to be. The wind for them always sits in the right quarter ; they are the lucky ones, they win the victory. Whatever they undertake succeeds, though all the world be against it. For God who puts it into their hearts and gives them sense and courage, He puts it into their hands also, and it must be accomplished. Such people I do not call educated but created princes and masters. They need no teaching and prescribing what and how they shall do ; before one can teach them, they have done it. Such was the doughty warrior Hannibal. No one taught him how to beat the Romans so cruelly ; he had the master and teacher in himself. He did it all before any one could tell him how, and did it sometimes against the counsel and teaching of others. And here I must give you an example from Cicero. Cicero writes that when Hannibal applied to Antiochus the Great for aid against the Romans, and was well received at court, there was a philosopher there by the name of Phormio, whom Antiochus desired that Hannibal should hear. So Phormio was summoned, and paraded his wisdom. He discoursed for hours about wars and captains, — how they should be conducted and constituted, and what goes to make a good warrior. And all the people applauded and marvelled at his discourse. And Antiochus asked Hannibal how he liked it ; and Hannibal said : ‘I have seen many old fools in my day, but never one equal to this Phormio.’ And Cicero commends the answer. Hannibal had conquered the Romans and all the world, and Phormio, who had never in all his life seen an army, was going to teach him how to make war. The world is full of Phormios, who know better than any one else how a thing should be done and can never do it. So when David was to fight Goliath, they wanted to teach him how ; they put armor on him, and rigged him out with helmet and sword. Yes, dear ! David could n’t



bear the armor ; he had another teacher in himself, and he slew Goliath before they knew how he was going to do it. For he was not an apprentice in this art, but a God-created master of it."

Here we take leave of the greatest man of modern history ; the man from whom modern history emanated, in whose word and work are found its most influential factors, — the spirit of inquiry, independent thought, the onward impulse, defiance of consecrated wrong. At the distance of three centuries our age still obeys the law of that movement whose van he led ; and the latest age will bear its impress. For here amid the phantasms which crowd the stage of human existence was a great reality, a genuine nature, a piece of the solid world, one whom it is impossible to imagine not to have been.

A recent writer, Professor Schön of Vienna, has made the discovery that Luther was crazy ; for he said and did things which surely no sane man, as such minds esteem sanity, — that is, no observer of conventional propriety, — would have said or done. Yes ! he was mad, as are all of his mould and kin. He was mad to burn the Pope's Bull in the public square, to defy the Devil in high places, to give to Germany a Bible and a Church, and to open the way to spiritual freedom. He was mad with that overpowering, upheaving madness which sweeps away corruptions, breaks down the old refuge of lies, and purges and renews the world. Pity such madness is not infectious, is not communicable, is not to be had at will, and appears at intervals so rare in this sane world's history !

## CHAPTER VII.

HANS SACHS AND ULRICH VON HUTTEN.

IT is seldom that one and the same season is equally fruitful the world over, or even in neighbor-lands. This is true of intellectual as well as of material fecundity; as true of literary harvests as it is of cereal crops. The sixteenth century, elsewhere, and especially in England, so wondrously prolific of masterpieces of poetic art, — the richest epoch in her literary annals, — was Germany's leanest, fallowest time. I speak of poetic creations merely. It need not be said that the century which bore and cradled the Protestant Reformation was not an era of mental stagnation. Then, if ever, the national mind was wide awake, and the exquisite satire of the famed "*Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*" shows what wit and sap there were in the scholars of that time. But the works of that period were mostly theological, controversial; moreover they were written in Latin, and cannot be reckoned as constituents of German literature.

The genuine German Muse, so assiduously cultivated in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was almost deserted in the sixteenth. Almost, but not quite. I have spoken of Luther's place and part in the literature of Germany, of the eminent importance especially of his version of the Bible in fixing and equalizing the language of the people. I have now a word to say of one of Luther's contemporaries, the one most like him in some

respects, and notably in the quality which the Germans call *Derbheit*,—in hearty, downright plainness of speech. I speak of Hans Sachs, — like Luther one of the people, the son of a tailor, born in the city of Nürnberg in 1494.

The city of Nürnberg was then one of the principal commercial cities, not of Germany only, but of Europe. It was the great *entrepôt* of the trade with the East, which before the discovery of the passage around the Cape of Good Hope was carried on by Venetian merchants, and from Venice found its way through the passes of the Tyrol to the great centres of distribution for the North, of which Augsburg and Nürnberg were the chief. Nürnberg was also the capital of German art, the home of A. Dürer, of Peter Vischer, of Adam Kraft and others, whose works still glorify her churches and museums and public squares. At present, the solemn mediæval city by a curious destiny has become the world's toy-shop. No longer an imperial free city, no longer a commercial power and a centre of æsthetic influence, she is active still in another kind. Instead of creating altar-pieces, entombments, Adams and Eves, St. Sebald's monuments and architectural fountains, she supplies the nurseries of Europe and America with Noah's arks and Swiss villages, and wooden armies and miniature fifes and drums. Scarcely a child of any well-to-do family but receives once a year a token from Nürnberg through the mediation of Saint Nicholas.

In his seventh year Hans Sachs attended the Latin school in his native town, where "I studied," he tells us, "Puerilia Grammatica and Musica according to the custom of the time, all which I have since forgotten." Himself the son of a tailor, he chose for his own profession and life-work that of shoemaker, to which he was

apprenticed in his fifteenth year, and which, having in his twentieth year become master of his craft, he practised so long as he was able to work. He is one of that illustrious triad, including Boehme and George Fox, whose life and works have defied the proverb *Ne sutor ultra crepidam*, — “the cobbler must stick to his last.” It is worthy of note that precisely the craft which the proverb thus restricts has given the most shining examples of the perfect compatibility of mechanical pursuits with intellectual attainments and literary eminence, — eminence not merely in works of the understanding (which that craft might seem especially adapted to promote), but in the way of deep philosophic insight.

Hans Sachs was not only master-cordwainer, but master-singer as well. That term is explained by a fact which should be stated as one of the curiosities of literature. Poetry, no longer the delight and occupation, as in the centuries preceding, of knights and nobles, had devolved upon the middle or burgher class, and was constituted a regular profession, organized like other callings, and, like all the civil pursuits of that day, having its regular guilds, apprenticeships and masterships, and rules of the craft. To the Minnesingers of the thirteenth century had succeeded the Master-singers of the fifteenth and sixteenth. In Nürnberg alone there is said to have been two hundred and fifty Master-singers by profession. That not much poetry, none of the genuine sort, was born of such an institution; that Pegasus in civil harness, yoked to a dray, could but amble at best in doggerel fashion, — may be assumed as a matter of course. Goethe, referring to the abundance of poets in his day, says: “In the time of roses they are found on every wayside briar. But the time of roses is a dispensation



of Nature, — a grace of Heaven which no civil institution and no human device can bring about.”

The fundamental principle of the institution of the Master-singers was that the art of poetry, like any other art, might be acquired by any one who chose to apply himself thereto. In direct contradiction of the saying, “*Poeta nascitur, non fit*,” it was held that diligent observance of certain rules was all that was needed for this high function; and accordingly associations were formed, schools were established, and a grammar of rules called a *Tabulatur* prepared for the making and furnishing of poets. The first of these associations is said to have been founded at Mainz in the fourteenth century by Heinrich Meissen, one of the later Minnesingers, — called, from his use of the word *Frau*<sup>1</sup> in his praise of women, “*Frauenlob*.” In grateful acknowledgment of this tribute the women of Mainz, when he died, bore his body to the churchyard with loud lament, and poured wine upon his grave. From Mainz, under a charter granted by Charles IV., the association extended its branches to other cities, Strasburg, Frankfort, and in the fifteenth century to Nürnberg and Augsburg. These affiliated guilds consisted chiefly of mechanics. The leading members were masters in the several guilds of their callings, — shoemakers, tailors, locksmiths, brass founders, and the like. After a specified term of apprenticeship in the *Sing-schule*, the poetic aspirant was publicly examined in a solemn assembly of the whole guild. He was required to give proof of his knowledge of versification and rhyme and all the rules of the *Tabulatur*. If he acquitted himself satisfactorily he was graduated as journeyman, and after further proficiency promoted to the rank of

<sup>1</sup> Instead of *Weib*, — *lady* instead of *woman*.

master-singer. Occasionally there were exhibitions of master-singers competing for prizes in one or another city of the association. One of these exhibitions, presided over by the Emperor Maximilian, and given in one of the churches of Nürnberg, is described by August Hagen: Near the pulpit was a second pulpit called the *Singerstuhl*, occupied successively by the different competitors, and in the choir was a platform where sat the "markers," whose duty it was to mark the mistakes in measure or matter of which a singer might be guilty, counting on their fingers the syllables in each verse to prove the correctness of the metre. The victor was rewarded with a silver chain bearing a medal on which was an image of King David, who was accounted the master-singer of the world.

Had Hans Sachs produced nothing else in the way of poetry than the verses which he made professionally as member of the honorable guild of Master-singers, his name it is likely would not have survived. Four thousand and odd poems he is said to have manufactured in that capacity, made according to rule and measure, no doubt entirely correct, and very worthless. Not one of them has come down to us, for the very sufficient reason that he had the good sense to suppress them all. "If, nevertheless," says Koberstein, "he is to be regarded as the best German poet of his time, that distinction is due to those poems only which he composed, so to speak, out of school, in the simple artless form of short-rhymed couplets, and in the tone of the *Volkspoesie*. Only these productions, whose number he himself estimates at two hundred, he arranged for print and published in five folio volumes. Even of these a portion are as unpoetical as possible, because he sometimes

ventured on subjects which absolutely resist poetical treatment. But many of them, especially of the stories, farces, fables, carnival masques, and parables, leave scarce anything to be desired, unless it be a finer language and greater regularity of form."

In what may be called the technics of poetry, — in the art of versification, in metrical flow, in melody and rhythm, — Hans Sachs, it must be confessed, does not shine. His material is cast into a rough sort of measure which reads like that of *Hudibras*, with less of monotony perhaps, but with even greater disregard of metrical cadence, — a measure in which accent triumphs over quantity, and whose movement resembles that of a spring-wagon over a corduroy road. But the spirit of poetry was in the man, so far as the spirit of poetry consists in the seeing eye, the feeling heart, and the rightly divining and interpreting sense applied to the aspects of every-day life. In these respects he justifies what Goethe says of him in a well-known poem written in imitation of the old master-singer, and entitled "*Hans Sachsen's Poetische Sendung*, —

"Er hätt ein Auge treu und klug,  
Und liebevolles Herz genug,  
Zu schauen Manches klar und rein,  
Und wieder alles zu machen fein."

Among the extant writings of Hans Sachs are dramatic poems founded on Biblical history, and suggested perhaps by the Miracle Plays of an elder age. One of these is entitled "*The Unlike [that is, the good and bad] Children of Eve, and what God said to them.*" Its charm consists in its guileless simplicity and unconscious disregard of chronological and other proprieties. The

subject is handled with a childlike faith, which excuses and redeems what would otherwise be travesty and blasphemy. The good children — the term being used in the widest sense — are Abel, Seth, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, and Lamech; the bad children are Cain, Dathan, Achar, Nabal, Esau, and Nimrod. The poet has no scruple in representing all these worthies and unworthies as being boys of the same age. The Lord has signified to Eve that he will come down on a certain Sunday and catechise the boys. The good mother sets about her preparation for this event by making her boys neat and trim, as befits the occasion. But Cain, prefiguring his future wickedness, refuses to be washed, to have his hair combed, or to put on his Sunday clothes; and when the Lord enters, contrary to previous instruction, Cain gives him the left hand instead of the right. The catechising begins; the good boys are asked if they can say their prayers, whereupon each embodies in a really beautiful and touching paraphrase one of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. Then the Lord proceeds to question:

“Abel, what do you understand by the word *Amen*?”

“Seth, how do we know that prayer is heard?”

“Jared, if God does not give at once what we pray for, what must believers do?”

And so on with Enoch, Methuselah, and Lamech, all answering promptly and correctly as set down in the catechism in use in Hans Sachs's time. Then come the Commandments:—

“Abel, what is the first commandment?”

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

“What is forbidden and what is required in this commandment?”



So each answers in turn the questions put to him, and all receive encouraging words from the Lord. The Creed is next in order ; and here belief in Christ and the several points of Christian doctrine is confessed by these patriarchs with a promptitude which would be creditable to any Sunday-school of to-day. Then comes the turn of the bad boys, whose answers of course are incorrect and often ludicrously awry ; whereat the Lord is much displeased, declares them to be a bad lot, whose earthly portion will be a hard one, — for whereas the boys who have said their catechism well are to come to honor, and be kings and princes, scholars, preachers, and bishops, Cain and his associates are destined to be plowmen, cottagers, shepherds, hangmen, day-laborers, beadles, policemen, carriers, teamsters, shoemakers, and militiamen, or military volunteers, — *Landsknechte*.

The last term requires explanation. The Emperor Maximilian in the fifteenth century had raised some regiments for his army by voluntary enlistment. In times of peace these fighting men were thrown upon the country without employment, and took to begging from door to door. The money obtained in this way they often spent in gambling and carousing. In many ways they were a public nuisance, and much disliked by staid and sober citizens. They were called *Landsknechte*, (land-servants) ; whence the French *lansquenets*. They seem to have been especially hateful to Hans Sachs, who satirizes them in the following poem, which I find in Büsching's collection. It represents nine landsknechte who went begging about the country, and one day strolled up to the gate of heaven, where they knocked and begged admittance. Saint Peter as usual was keeping watch at the gate. When he saw the landsknechte he ran to the

Lord and said, "Lord, there's a parcel of poor fellows at the gate who want to come in." The Lord said, "Let them wait awhile." When the landsknechte were not admitted they began to curse and swear, and made use of certain strange oaths, among which was the word *Sacrament*. Saint Peter, who did not know much about swearing, thought they were talking of spiritual things, and pleaded with the Lord for their admittance. "I have never seen," he said, "a more pious set." The Lord replied, "Oh, Peter, you don't know them. I see they are landsknechte; if they were here they would make heaven too narrow for us with their mischievous pranks." But Peter persisted, and at last the Lord said, "Well, let them in; you will have them on your hands, and then you may see how you can get rid of them." So Peter ran and opened the gates and let in his pious landsknechte. No sooner were they in heaven than immediately they set about begging of everybody; and when they had collected a little money they squatted down on the first grass-plot and began to gamble. It was not long before they quarrelled over their dice, and rushed at each other in furious combat. Saint Peter, hearing the noise, came with great indignation, and took them to task. "What! will you squabble and fight in heaven?" This interference was fiercely resented. The landsknechte left off beating each other and fell upon Peter, whom they left half dead with their blows. When he had recovered his breath he came to the Lord with a piteous complaint. The Lord said, "It serves you right. Did I not advise you to keep them out? They are a shameful crew." Peter replied, "Oh, Lord, it was a great mistake; it shall be a warning to me never to admit another landsknecht. But now help me to get

them out." The Lord said, "Go tell one of the angels to take a drum and beat an alarm outside of the gates." No sooner was this done than the landsknechte, thinking it was the *reveillé*, rushed out; whereupon Saint Peter immediately closed the gates and barred them. And since then no landsknecht has ever been admitted to heaven, because Saint Peter has a grudge against them.

The other satire presents the landsknechte in connection with the opposite, Satanic interest. Lucifer in council with his devils informs them that he has heard of a class of people who have lately arisen in Germany, called landsknechte. The report of them had excited his interest. They were said to be averse to fasting, not particular about prayer, but given to carousing and much swearing. He would like to make their acquaintance. "Beelzebub, suppose you run up to Germany, capture a dozen of these fellows and bring them down to us." This Beelzebub undertakes to do. He enters a tavern which this gentry frequent, and hides himself behind the stove in that snug corner which in German houses is popularly called the *hell*. There he listens to the talk and watches the doings of the landsknechte. It makes his hair stand on end; and the worst of it is that he cannot get hold of them, because every time that one drank he repeated the customary *Gesegnet sei's*,—"May it be blessed to you!" So they were all unfortunately blest, and the Devil had no power over them. Now, it happened that one of them had stolen a fowl, which unknown to Beelzebub was hanging in the very corner he had chosen for his hiding-place. Presently one of them calls to the waiter, "Go fetch that fellow behind the stove! we'll pluck him and roast him," meaning the fowl. Beelzebub,



thinking that the order concerned himself, rushed from the little hell straight down to the great one, and made such a report of his adventure that Lucifer at once resolves to have nothing to do with the landsknechte; they would turn hell upside down, and make it such a place that no decent devil would be content to live there.

The best known of Hans Sachs's poems is the one entitled "Saint Peter and the Goose," — a parable designed to rebuke grumblers who fancy that the world might be better governed than it is, and would be so if they had the ruling of it.

When Jesus Christ was on earth he was walking with Peter in the country one day, when Peter said to him: "Oh, Lord God and Master mine, I wonder greatly at your forbearance, since you are God Almighty, that you let things go on as they do in the world. As the prophet Habakkuk says, 'crime and violence are instead of right; the ungodly triumph over the good and just.' False doctrines circulate and cross each other like the fish in the sea; there is wickedness everywhere among high and low; and you look on and do nothing, as if these things nowise concerned you, and you did not care how the world goes on. You might put an end to all this evil, if you would only take hold in good earnest and exercise your sovereign power. Oh, if I were only Lord God for a year and had your omnipotence, I would govern after a very different fashion; I would soon stop war and fighting, and cheating and plunder, and establish a quiet life on the earth." The Lord said to Peter: "So you think you could exercise a wiser and juster rule than I; that you would know better how to protect the good and punish the wicked? Well, you shall make the trial. This day you shall be Lord God in my place. Do and



ordain what you will ; be hard and severe, or gentle and mild ; send curses or blessings, order fine weather or wind and rain ; you may punish or reward, afflict or comfort. In short, I resign my whole government for to-day into your hands." And therewith the Lord gave Peter his staff. Whereat the disciple was greatly rejoiced, thought to do wonders in the way of reform, and was meditating where to begin, when there came along a poor woman, emaciated, pale, in tattered garments, driving her one goat to pasture. When she came to the crossing of two roads she said to the goat, " Go now, in God's name ! May He protect thee that thou comest to no harm, for I cannot stay to watch thee. I must go to my day's work, or my children will have no bread." So the woman went back to the village, and left the goat to shift for itself. Then the Lord said to Peter, " Here now is your opportunity. You heard the poor woman's prayer, how she besought the Lord to watch over her goat ; you are supreme Lord for to-day, it behooves you to answer that prayer." So Peter followed the goat, resolved that no harm should befall it, and that the woman should receive her own again safe and sound at nightfall. The goat was lively ; it ran hither and thither, up hill and down, into bogs and thickets, and Peter after it, puffing and panting, faithful to his charge. The day was hot and Peter was old, unused to such efforts. He suffered severely. He brought the goat back safely at night, but so hard a day he had never known. A day's fishing was sport in comparison. When the Lord saw him he laughed, and said, " Peter, would you like to retain the command a little longer ? " And Peter answered, " Dear Lord, take back Thy staff and Thy power, I have no desire to administer Thy

government longer. Pardon my folly ! I see that all my wisdom scarcely suffices to keep a goat in order."

In all Hans Sachs's productions there is a serious purpose and a moral for popular use, which lies sufficiently near the surface ; but the form of narrative in which he is most successful is the comic, and the favorites among his poems — his own favorites, evidently, as well as his readers' — are the class of pieces which he entitles "Schwänke;" jests or drolleries, like this of the "Little Tailor": —

A tailor was in the habit of throwing large scraps of cloth to the mouse, or throwing them into the hell, — the Germans use both phrases for what we call "cabbaging." One night he dreams that the Devil shows him a monstrous flag, composed of all the scraps he has cabbaged in the course of his professional life. His conscience takes the alarm, and he solemnly vows in the presence of his journeymen to throw no more scraps to the mouse. For a time he desists from the practice, and honestly restores all the remnants to his customers. But at length, when the impression of his dream had grown faint, he receives a piece of splendid gold brocade from which a coat is to be cut, and he cannot resist the temptation to cabbage a considerable fragment. His journeymen remind him of his vow ; but he pleads in excuse that in the flag which the Devil showed him in his dream there was no brocade. Finally the little tailor dies ; and although he is strictly considered no fit subject for heaven, he pleads so piteously that Saint Peter in the kindness of his heart smuggles him in and assigns him a corner where he would be out of the way behind the stove. Sitting there and looking down on the earth one day, he espies a poor woman stealing a piece of cloth. So

he creeps from behind the stove, catches up the Lord God's footstool, flings it at the woman, fractures her spine, and makes her a cripple for life. It soon transpires what has become of the footstool, and the Lord says to the little tailor: "You miserable scamp! if I had flung my footstool at you every time you threw a piece of cloth to the mouse, when you were tailoring down there, there would n't have been a tile left in the roof of your house, and you would have hobbled on crutches with a broken back all the days of your life."

That Hans Sachs embraced the cause of the Reformers in the great schism of the sixteenth century will be readily inferred from the genuine *Deutscheit*, the "Germanity," of the man. He welcomed the new gospel at once in a poem entitled "The Wittenberg Nightingale;" and one of the finest of his serious pieces is a threnody on Martin Luther; in which theology personified is represented as uttering her wail over the dead body of the great Doctor.

As a proof of his diligence and fecundity, it is related that in the three hot months of his sixty-ninth year, in July, August, and September of 1563, he wrote thirty-four comic pieces, besides several spiritual poems and *Meistergesänge*. How many pairs of shoes he made during the same period is not recorded. He stopped writing, overtaken with mental decrepitude, at the age of eighty, two years before his death, having composed in the fifty-five years of his intellectual activity two hundred and eight tragedies and comedies, seventeen hundred stories and fables, and forty-two hundred *Meistergesänge*, — in all, six thousand and forty-eight pieces; all regularly numbered, and signed Hans Sachs.

Other writers of distinction who flourished in this period, including a part of the fifteenth together with the



sixteenth century, are Sebastian Brandt, famous for his satirical poem of the "Narrenschiff;" Thomas Murner, an opponent of the Reformation, which he satirized in a poem called "The Great Lutheran Fool exorcised by Dr. Murner;" and Johann Fischart, author of the "Lucky Ship from Zurich."

More memorable far than these, historically one of the foremost figures of the time, and one of Germany's noblest sons, was Ulrich von Hutten, brave champion of truth and freedom, fellow-laborer with Luther, although in a different field in the work of the Reformation. Hutten was born on the 21st of April, 1488, of a noble Franconian family, in their ancestral castle, Steckelberg on the Main. At the age of twelve he was sent to the monastery of Fulda, and being the fourth of several sons was destined by his father for the service of the Church, as a member of the brotherhood of that ancient *Stift*. But Ulrich's genius indicated a different calling; and a nobleman of influence, Eitelwolf von Stein, who had noted the extraordinary talent of the youth, encouraged his refusal to take the monastic vows, and aided his escape to Cologne and thence to the newly established university at Frankfort, where he enjoyed the powerful patronage of Albrecht of Brandenburg, afterward Cardinal and Archbishop of Mainz. I shall not undertake to follow his subsequent fortunes as writer and soldier through hardships and dangers in Italy and Germany during the first decade of the sixteenth century. In 1515 he started, in connection with his friend Crotus Rubianus, the celebrated "*Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*," aimed at the *Finsterlinge*, or obscurantists, of Cologne. Johann Reuchlin, in whose interest and defence the satire was first undertaken, was



said to have been one of the contributors, but recent investigation has shown that neither he nor Erasmus had any part in the work. But Hutten was the principal writer of those pungent attacks which aided so powerfully the cause of the Reformation by exposing the ignorance, the stupidity, and vices of the clergy. The excellence of his latinity in this and other publications won for him the admiration of the scholars of the day, and notably of Erasmus and Melancthon. Successful in verse as in prose, he was crowned with a laurel wreath at Augsburg in 1517 by the Emperor Maximilian, as *poeta imperialis*. In the same year, in his paternal castle of Steckelberg, he edited the treatise of Laurentius Valla, exposing the forgery of the pretended donation of Constantine to the bishops of Rome. This he had the audacity to dedicate to Pope Leo X., with an introduction in which he lashed the vices of the popes generally, and promised, if the work should prove acceptable to his Holiness, to follow it up with other similar presents. He continued to write satires on Rome and the Church, which induced the Pope at last to demand of Albrecht of Mainz the arrest of Hutten, who was to be sent prisoner to Rome for trial and punishment. But Hutten, who meanwhile had openly espoused the cause of Luther, threw himself on the protection of the imperial Knight, Franz von Sickingen, with whose aid he instituted a league of the Knights of the Empire against their spiritual oppressors. He declined an invitation from Francis I. of France to serve under the French Crown, preferring to abide the issue of the evangelical cause in Germany. In 1522 Franz von Sickingen, having made war on the Archbishop of Treves, was obliged to succumb to the united forces of the Spiritual Prince and those of the

Elector of the Palatinate and of Philip of Hessa. Hutten thus lost his protector and fled to Basel, where he was cordially welcomed by the most distinguished of the laity, except his former friend Erasmus, whom he himself had advised to take refuge in that city, and who now shunned him as a dangerous acquaintance. This, and the hostile attitude of the bishop of the diocese, induced him to quit Basel for Zurich. He was then enfeebled by disease, and needed rest; but Erasmus was base enough to write to the Senate of Zurich to expel him from their city. By the aid of Zwingli he finally found shelter with a clergyman skilled in medical science on the island Ufnau, in the lake of Constance, where he died the victim of grief and disease on the 1st of September, 1523, in the thirty-sixth year of his age. "Thither repair, young tourist," says Herder in his beautiful memoir; "seek out his resting-place and say, 'Here lies the defender of the German people, of liberty and truth, one who would fain have been something more than their champion in words. A border-island has furnished him an unknown grave.'" His monument bearing the inscription —

"Hic eques auratus jacet oratorque disertus,  
Huttenus vates, carmine et ense potens,"

is no longer extant.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES.

THE seventeenth century, amid all the wars and revolutions which thicken the annals of its outer life, is marked, if we look within, by the opposite element of quietism ; by an introversive turn of mind which gave to that stormy age the deepest mystics of modern time, — in England, George Fox and his followers, especially Barclay ; in France, Madame Guyon and Fénelon, and Père Malebranche ; in Spain, Molinos ; in Holland, Spinoza ; and in Germany, prominent among others, the great theosopher Jacob Boehme, to whom Schelling, deepest thinker of the Kantian line, is indebted for many a pregnant hint, and Johann Scheffler, better known as Angelus Silesius. It is not my purpose to enlarge on these names. I mention them, — and others might be mentioned, — only to show what wealth of interior spiritual life was born of an age of which otherwise the history of German literature makes little account. Certainly it was not a barren age which produced such men as Kepler, Boehme, and Leibnitz. But of literature in the narrower sense, of artistic literature, Germany in all that century exhibits nothing of supreme mark, — not a writer in verse or prose of world-wide fame, very few of whom even a German of average culture would be likely to know more than the name, or so much as that. And yet that period abounds in second and third-class poets

in whose compositions, scattered here and there, are many brave hits, bright thoughts, delicate turns, original conceits, which modern poets might crib with effect, and their readers be none the wiser as to the rights of authorship. It is one of the mishaps of literature that the good things of the minor poets drop out of sight and mind, — poets famous in their day, on the strength perhaps of these few felicities, but whose fame, having no deepness of earth, matured too soon and perished as quickly. The many poor things they wrote, and which deserved to be forgotten, dragged their few good things down with them into oblivion. Germany was not the only country in which the seventeenth century produced its crop of small and now forgotten poets. The difference between it and other countries consists not so much in the multitude of small poets as in the absence of any great one. England had during that period her Milton, her Cowley, and her Waller. Dryden, Marvel, and Suckling are all familiar names. Perhaps we have read Denham, but few know anything of Rochester, Roscommon, Pomfret, Dorset, Philips, Halifax.

The best German poets of the seventeenth century seem to have been the writers of sacred lyrics. Their number is amazing. Franz Horn mentions a collection in three hundred volumes, containing 33,712 hymns. Many of these hymns have won for themselves a permanent place in German hymn-books, and some of them have found their way into English collections. Sir Henry Wotton, if I remember rightly, is indebted to a German original for his

“How happy is he born or taught.”

The well known hymns —



"O sacred head now wounded,"

"Give to the winds thy fears,"

are both translations from Paul Gerhard. So is

"Evening and morning, sunset and dawning,  
Wealth, peace, and gladness, comfort in sadness."

From Herzog we have —

"In mercy, Lord, remember me;  
Be with me through this night."

From Rosenroth :

"Dayspring of eternity,  
Dawn on us this morning tide!"

From Rodigast :

"Whate'er my God ordains is right."

From Scheffler :

"Thee would I love, my strength, my tower."

This last named hymnist demands, among German poets of the seventeenth century, particular notice. Johann Scheffler, commonly called Angelus Silesius, was born in 1624 at Breslau in Silesia, where he died in 1677. A physician by profession, and bearing the high title of "imperial court physician," he was yet best known to his contemporaries, as he is to posterity, as theologian and poet. He studied a year at Strasburg, then went to Leyden in Holland, where he spent several years. While there he was admitted to the fellowship of "Students of Secret Wisdom," as they were called, and became acquainted with the writings of Jacob Boehme, which had been carried thither for publication by Scheffler's townsman and subsequent patron, Abraham Frank, the publication of them in Germany having been forbidden by clerical authority. They confirmed in Scheffler a tend-

ency to mysticism, for which he seems to have had, from early youth, a strong predisposition. On his return to his native city, his peculiar opinions, together with his neglect of the formal observances of the Church, brought him into conflict with the Lutheran clergy, who persecuted him as a heretic and an unbeliever. A Lutheran by birth, he was driven by the harsh treatment of his fellow confessors to join the Catholic Church, in whose less dogmatic sanctuary he found ample toleration, and of which he thenceforth became a zealous champion and even priest.

This is all that need be told of his external history. His literary life was equally divided between controversial theology and the composition of poems, partly devotional and partly mystical. From the latter I select the following verses as exhibiting the extravagant boldness of his thought rather than the excellence of his poetic gift. They are from Hunt's "Essay on Pantheism": —

" God in my nature is involved, as I in the Divine;  
I help to make His being up as much as He does mine.  
As much as I to God, owes God to me, —  
His blissfulness and self-sufficiency.  
I am as rich as God, — no grain of dust  
That is not mine too; share with me He must.  
I am as great as God and He as small as I;  
He cannot me surpass, or I beneath Him lie.  
God cannot without me a moment's space endure;  
Were I to be destroyed, then God would be no more."

" While aught thou art, or know'st or lov'st or hast,  
So long, believe me, will thy burden last.  
Rise above time and space, and thou canst be  
At any moment in eternity.  
Eternity and time, time and eternity,  
Are in themselves alike, — the difference is in thee.

'Tis thou thyself mak'st time, the clock-work is thy sense;  
If thou but drop'st the spring, then time will vanish hence.  
Think not the world will fade: the world will not decay,  
The darkness of the world alone will pass away."

" I see in God both God and man;  
He, man and God in me.  
I quench His thirst, and He, in turn,  
Helps my necessity."

Three other poets of this period, distinguished among the crowd of hymn-writers, I would like to present, but can only name, — Paul Flemming, born in 1609, died in 1640; Andreas Gryphius, born in 1631, died in 1664; and Joachim Neander, born in 1620, died in 1680.

I pass by these to speak of Opitz, who preceded them in time, and who, with less of poetic feeling, marks an epoch in German literature as the first to establish metrical rules.

Martin Opitz von Boberfeld (this title of nobility he received from the Emperor Ferdinand II.) was called by his contemporaries and by writers of the next generation the German Orpheus, the Father and Restorer of German poetry, the Pindar, the Homer, the Virgil, of his time. The German Muse was called after him the "Opizinne." If we seek to legitimate these praises by a nearer acquaintance with the man, we find a scholar of wide culture, a courtier of commanding graces, but by no means a poet in any high sense of the term; a man whose life was spent in going about from place to place, winning patrons and honors by adroit adulation, forming personal connections with the great of his day at home and abroad; the friend of scholars, among others of Hugo Grotius, whose "Evidences of the True Religion," written in Dutch, he translated into German;

the favored of nobles and kings, to whom he addressed poetic gratulations of unctuous smoothness ; laurel-crowned, though a Protestant, by the Catholic emperor, his chief patron ; and writing, besides the gratulations just mentioned, various poems which his contemporaries esteemed the last efforts of poetic art, but which recent critics pronounce exceedingly flat. Gervinus, the best historian of German poetry, ascribes his high repute to a fawning servility, which stooped to the smallest among the living, while it scrupled not to asperse the greatest among the dead. Vilmar portrays him as one of those men of mediocre talent, who are skilled in appropriating and bringing to market the intellectual element of their day ; who possess themselves of the current catchword and use it effectively ; who are not so far above the great mass that the average mind cannot find itself in them, and who, by fawning on the great and sailing with every wind, know how to secure the good-will of all,—one of that weak, good-natured, conceited kind, whom a strong age despises and a weak one exalts.

Thus the poetic idol of the seventeenth century is made the butt of the nineteenth. I am not quite sure that modern criticism is not as excessive in its depreciation as that of the elders was in its panegyric. After all, there must have been real merit in one who in any age could win such fame. The merit of Opitz was twofold. In the first place, he did good service by vindicating against all its contemners the claims of the German language, and commending its use to scholars and writers who, until then, had thought Latin the only fit medium of literary communication, and had used only that. His other and chief merit, which even Vilmar



concedes to him, is a radical reform of German metrical art. His predecessors had written verses measured by the number of syllables, with no regard to rise and fall, — what the Latins call *arsis* and *thesis*, and the Germans *Hebung* and *Senkung*, — which often, as in Hans Sachs, had a very unrhythmical effect. Opitz, in 1624, published a work entitled “Die deutsche Poeterei,” which, as Vilmar says, dates the beginning of a new era of poetry. “It marks, as few books in the world have done, the initiation of a new linguistic sense, — *Sprachbewusstseins*. It was the word which all were seeking, which all were endeavoring to utter, but which none had succeeded in doing. Opitz hit it, and the world repeated it after him, and repeats it to this day. . . . It divided forever the poetry of the old time from that of the new.” Surely, this is sufficient — this improvement in the form, in spite of all defects in the matter — to immortalize any name. The doctrine laid down by Opitz, and straightway accepted, was that German verses, like those of the ancients, must have due respect to quantity in their metrical movement; there must be a regular alternation of rise and fall, long syllables and short, corresponding with the natural accent of the words, — regular iambuses and trochees. On the other hand, he rejected dactyls, to which the German language so readily adapts itself, — witness Schiller’s “Windet zum Kranze die goldenen Aehren,” — and with them, of course, the anapest and the amphibrach. Moreover, he sinned, they say, in transplanting from the French the cumbrous Alexandrine; and worse still, he sinned, as Vilmar thinks, in repudiating the old German combinations, where the adjective follows the noun, — *das Mündlein roth*, and *die Hündlein weiss* (“the

little mouth red ;” “the little hands white”). That would not do ; it must be “the little red mouth,” and “the little white hands.” And “the little red mouth” and “the little white hands” it has been in German poetry, with few exceptions, ever since,—to the satisfaction of the purists, and much to the disgust of all lovers of the mediæval Muse.

There is little else that need detain us in that seventeenth century when, amid the thunder and smoke of many a battle-field, out of darkness and chaos, a new intellectual Germany was struggling into life. Passing on to the eighteenth century, we are met on its threshold by the ever-honored name of one who, though chiefly known as naturalist, physiologist, and therapist, holds also a distinguished place in German literature as one of the foremost poets of his day.

Albrecht von Haller, born 1708, a native of Bern, Swiss by birth, but German by speech and pen, was one of those intellectual prodigies which suggest an exceptional brain, a power of cerebration which only by an occasional freak of nature falls to the lot of man. At the age of ten he is said to have compiled a Chaldee grammar, a Greek and Hebrew dictionary, and two thousand biographical compends, drawn from such sources as were then at his command. Latin he had already mastered, having begun it at the age of six. In maturer years, besides his great scientific works on which his fame chiefly rests,—his “Elements of Physiology,” his six volumes of “Prelections,” and his ten quarto volumes, or what he called libraries (*bibliothecæ*) of botany, anatomy, chirurgy, and practical medicine,—besides these, he contributed twelve thousand

articles to the "Göttinger Gelehrte Anzeigen," a periodical of which for many years he was editor. These tasks he performed while holding various offices, — academic, civil, and political, — first at Göttingen, then at Bern, involving more or less labor, responsibility, and care, and while carrying on a correspondence in five different languages with all the savans and learned societies of Europe, of nearly all of which he was a member. His literary works, as distinguished from his scientific, — his "Letters to his Daughter on the Truths of Christianity," which were translated into English; his "Letters on Free-thinking," against the French philosophers; his novels, of which he wrote three; and last of all, his poems, — the best German poems, as I have said, of his age, — these were the asides, the recreations of his leisure hours. Where the leisure came in, seeing he was also a practising physician, it is difficult to say.

Of immense importance was Haller to the newly-established University of Göttingen, to which he was called by George II., from whom the university took its name of Georgia Augusta. It owed to him its botanical garden, its anatomical theatre, its obstetrical school, and, above all, its early fame. During seventeen years, — the best of his active life, — he devoted himself to the service of that university, declining an invitation which he received in 1747 to a chair in the University of Oxford. In 1753, at the age of forty-five, he resigned his post, and retired to his native city of Bern, where the Republic secured his residence by a pension, which relieved him of all pecuniary trouble, and where the remainder of his days was spent in ceaseless literary and scientific labors.



Of von Haller's poems, the most successful are his lyrical pieces, which in point of diction and mechanical finish, if not of poetic feeling, are greatly superior to most of the poetry of his day. The most striking of these is the threnody on the death of his first wife, of which there is a spirited Italian version. The passionate grief of the widower would seem to have exhausted itself in this effusion. At any rate, he soon married a second wife, whose death he bewailed in more moderate strains. The third is supposed to have survived him. He died at the age of sixty-nine, in 1777.

Here was a man who knew how to live, — whose complete record illustrates the vast capabilities and infinite value of life. A sickly child, at no time enjoying full health, he filled — he crammed to the uttermost — with learning and doing his span of years. And what is still rarer, he knew when to die, — which he did not a day too soon, nor a day too late. Not a day too soon, for his work was finished and complete; not a day too late, for he died at his best. And the manner of his death befitted such a life. Philosophically curious to the last, conversing with his physician, with his finger on his own wrist, watching, as though it were another's, the ebbing pulse, he suddenly exclaimed, "It has stopped!" — and he died.

Contemporary with Haller was Hagedorn, whose graceful lyrics are still admired by the curious, but who wrote too little to leave a decided impress on his time.

Contemporary with Haller was also his fellow-townsmen John Jacob Bodmer, founder of what is called the Swiss School. Like Haller, Bodmer was a man of untiring industry. His principal work, "The Noachid,"



is a poem in twelve books, in which are gathered around the central figure of Noah divers narratives and pictures of patriarchal time. Besides this and many other original works in poetry and prose, he translated Homer, translated the "*Argonautae of Apollonius*," Milton's "*Paradise Lost*," Butler's "*Hudibras*," Pope's "*Dunciad*," and edited from old manuscripts portions of the *Nibelungenlied*, "*Baarlam und Josaphat*," and a collection of the *Minnesingers*, representing one hundred and forty poets, with accompanying glossaries. It is true he had plenty of time in which to do all this, for he lived to the age of eighty-five, dying in 1783.

His great work, "*The Noachid*," has had little success. The critics complained that what with "*The Noachid*" and Gessner's "*Pictures of the Deluge*," German literature was water-logged during that period, — since known as the "period of the deluge," or the "water epoch." A fatality attends the success and non-success of books, whereby this of Bodmer has not received, as it seems to me, the credit it deserves. But time is judge, if not of merit, yet of fortune. The verdict of a century is not to be set aside. The oblivion which soon overtook "*The Noachid*" has deepened with the lapse of years. The poetic Noah, unlike his prototype, went down with his flood.

The best known writer of the Swiss School is Salomon Gessner, born in 1730. His *Idyls* had a large circulation in their day; they were translated into several European languages, and especially admired in France, for the same reason, perhaps, which made the fortune of Saint-Pierre's "*Paul and Virginia*," — their contrast with the highly-spiced sensational fiction which then prevailed. It was milk diet to a stomach whose diges-

tion had been impaired by ragoûts and piquant salads. Milk tempered with water best expresses the character of those innocent idyls. Gessner was a painter, and his descriptions of natural scenery reflect the author's skill with the brush; but the personages are bloodless, and their talk insipid. Lord Byron relates that his German master gave him Gessner's "Death of Abel" to begin the study of the language with; and he wickedly adds, that the impression made on him was that Cain deserved the thanks of mankind for ridding the world of such a sheepish and utterly feeble character.

Leaving Switzerland and the Swiss School, we encounter the life-long opponent of that school, John Christopher Gottsched, born in 1700, in Juditenkirch, near Königsberg. Having studied in the University of Königsberg, he betook himself, in his twenty-fifth year, to Leipsic, where he was eventually made professor, and where he founded, in opposition to the Swiss School at Zürich, represented by Bodmer and Breitinger, the Leipsic School of Letters, styled "*Die Leipziger deutsche Gesellschaft*." Devoid of all poetic talent, with no creative power, — limited, bigoted, vapid, — he yet, by dint of self-confident assumption, with the aid of his wife (Ludovica Adelgunde Victoria, the better head of the two), reigned for twenty years the literary dictator of Germany. He prescribed to his countrymen, as models for imitation, the French writers of the age of Louis XIV., and laid down the law of literary composition in several successive journals, in which he waged war against the Swiss School, and also against the new direction taken by Klopstock and his followers. He outlived his wife, and, with her, his authority. De-throned by younger and more commanding talent, left

high-and-dry by the progress of literary taste, he died neglected and forgotten at the age of sixty-six.

The measure of Gottsched's critical ability may be inferred from his attempt to write down Milton, whose "Paradise Lost" had just appeared in a German translation by Bodmer. Gottsched sagely prophesied that the fame of the British poet would be short-lived, and gave his reasons for so thinking, which amount to this, — that Gottsched did not like Milton. And the reason that Gottsched did not like Milton was, that the translation of "Paradise Lost" was the product of the Swiss School. He also sneered at Shakspeare, who had the bad taste to bring witches on the stage.

Carlyle tells us that in "Pinkerton's Geography," under the head of Germany, Gottsched is named as the sole representative of German literature, — "he," it is said, "having first introduced a purer style." The date of "Pinkerton's Geography" was 1811, six years after the death of Schiller.

One merit must be conceded to Gottsched, and is recognized by native writers; namely, this, — that he purged the language of foreign idioms, and in this sense introduced a purer style. It is also recorded in his praise that he improved the stage by ruling out the traditional *Hanswurst*, and that he made a collection of all the old plays preparatory to a history of German dramatic art.

From contemporary notices one is tempted to believe that Gottsched owed something of his authority to his bodily stature, which was very imposing. This is said to have been his reason for quitting Königsberg. As a Prussian subject, having reached his full growth and finished his academic studies, he found himself imper-



illed by Frederic William's passion for tall men. So he fled to Leipsic to avoid being kidnapped and enrolled in the royal body-guard. Goethe records a visit which he paid him, when a student at Leipsic, in company with Schlosser:—

“We sent in our names. The servant led us into a spacious room, saying that his master would immediately appear. Whether we misunderstood a motion which he made I cannot say; enough, we supposed that he motioned us into an adjoining room. We entered upon a strange scene; at the same moment Gottsched, the great, broad, gigantic man, clad in a green damask dressing-gown, with red sarcenet lining, came in at the opposite door, but his enormous head was bald, and without any covering. That defect, however, was to be remedied; the servant rushed in by a side-door with a great full-bottomed wig on his hand, the curls reaching down to his elbow, and with a frightened look handed the head-dress to his master. Gottsched, without expressing the least vexation, with his left hand lifted the wig from the arm of his servant and tossed it dexterously on his head, while with his right paw he gave the poor fellow a box on the ear, which sent him tumbling and spinning, as one sees it in a comedy, out of the door; whereupon the venerable patriarch urged us to sit down, and with good grace carried on a long conversation.”

The literary sovereignty assumed by Gottsched, and maintained for years by dint of vigorous self-assertion, fell naturally, by right of superior gifts, to Gellert, his successor, to whom it was freely conceded by his fellow-citizens.

Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, from the middle until near the close of the eighteenth century, was decidedly Germany's most popular writer, and long after Goethe and Schiller had appeared on the stage, still commanded the votes of a large portion of his countrymen. I well



remember, as a youth in Germany, hearing him preferred to either of those poets. This preference was partly due to the popularity of that species of composition in which he excelled, — rhymed fables, which entertain without taxing the common mind, — and partly to the wholesome moral tone which breathes through all his writings. The veneration felt for the good man's character reinforced his literary fame. He is styled by his biographer, Cramer, the Epicharmos of Germany. The comparison is a bold one, considering the high position accorded to Epicharmos of Megara, the Pythagorean and comedian, by Greek authorities. Cramer grounds it on the words which occur in the epitaph on Epicharmos, — "His teachings were profitable for the young."

Gellert was born in Haynichen, in Saxony, in 1715, the son of Christian Gellert, a clergyman of the town, remarkable for his piety and his numerous offspring. A poor provincial parson, with a small salary, and thirteen children to provide for, could do little beyond his own teaching for the education of any one of them. Nevertheless, with the aid of State funds and other beneficiary provisions, Fürchtegott, the most promising, was prepared for college at Meissen, and studied theology and philosophy at Leipsic, where, having failed as a preacher through unconquerable shyness and defective elocution, he obtained, in 1745, the *venia docendi*, and in 1751 the position of professor *extraordinarius* of moral philosophy, with a salary of one hundred dollars. This, on his subsequent promotion to the post of professor *ordinarius*, was increased to a sum sufficient for the moderate wants of a man without a family.

The ancient University of Leipsic has had in all her annals no professor more honored and beloved, and

none more deserving, — none who exercised a more searching and salutary influence on his pupils. His piety free from cant, his benevolence unwearied in well-doing, his unaffected humility, his kind and gracious manner compelled the reverence and won the enthusiastic homage of the youth of the University. The largest auditorium in the city was scarcely sufficient to accommodate the students who thronged to his lectures. Goethe, who was one of his hearers in 1765, speaks with tenderness and respect of the saintly man, and passes lightly over certain weaknesses which a scrutinizing criticism might detect in his character and manner.

But Gellert's influence extended far beyond the limits of the University. He was, as I have said, the most popular writer of his time; and in spite of great physical infirmity and unremitting disease, he wrote incessantly and in various kinds, — lyrics, plays, novels, articles in the magazines of the day, lectures, poetic epistles, but, above all, fables. He had chosen for his thesis, on taking honors in the University, "The Fable in Poetry, and the Principal Fabulists," thus indicating the early bent of his mind in that direction. His Fables passed through one edition after another in rapid succession, and pervaded the European world. They were translated into many languages, — Russian, Danish, Dutch, Italian, and by six different hands into French. Their popularity at home, among even — nay, especially among — the unlettered classes, appears from an anecdote related by Cramer. A Saxon peasant, in the beginning of a hard winter, grateful for the pleasure he had derived from Gellert's Fables, came to Leipsic one day with a load of wood, halted at the Professor's door, and asked, "Is this the Herr who makes such beautiful

fables?" And then, with many apologies for the liberty he was taking, requested the acceptance of a load of wood as a token of his gratitude. More significant still is the fact that General Hülsen, in the Seven Years' War, spared Gellert's native town Haynichen with the billeting of soldiers, out of respect for the poet.

His popularity at home is easily accounted for. It is due in part to the long poetic drought which he somewhat relieved with his watering-pot. But why those Fables should have found such acceptance abroad it is not easy to explain. They have none of the sprightliness of Lafontaine, or the pith of Gay; the style is jejune, the invention mostly weak. It must have been the moral they enforced that won for them such wide acceptance. Here is a specimen, which he seems to have considered one of his best: —

"A wise painter in Athens, who painted less for money than for fame, once exhibited to a connoisseur a picture of Mars, and asked his judgment upon it. The connoisseur told him frankly that he was not altogether pleased with the picture; it was too labored, — there should be less appearance of art in it. The painter demurred; the connoisseur argued the matter on critical grounds, but could not convince him. Just then a young coxcomb entered, looked at the picture, and exclaimed, at first sight, 'Ye gods! what a masterpiece! Oh, what a foot! how skilfully the nails are rendered! It is the living Mars himself! How the helmet shines! and the shield, and the armor!' The painter was ashamed; he cast a piteous glance at the connoisseur. 'Now,' said he, 'I am convinced; you have not overstated.' As soon as the coxcomb was gone, he rubbed out the god of war.

"*Moral:* If your writing does not satisfy a connoisseur, that in itself is a bad sign; but when fools praise it, then it is time to suppress it."



The reigning king of Prussia, Frederick the Great, whose tastes had been formed on French models, entertained a sovereign contempt for the German language and literature; but so much was said to him about Gellert, that he wished to see the man whom everybody praised, and accordingly sent for him, and asked him to repeat one of his fables, addressing him throughout the interview in the third person singular, — a mode of speech which was formerly used in addressing servants, and the use of which implies a sense of superiority in the speaker and contempt for the hearer, not representable in English. Gellert recited the fable I have just given. When the recitation was finished, the monarch expressed himself pleased. “I had not supposed that a German could do anything so good. Where did you learn to write so?” “In the school of Nature.” “Have you imitated Lafontaine?” “No, your Majesty, I am an original; but I cannot say whether I am a good one.” “Nay! I must praise you. You shall come to me again; put your Fables in your pocket, and read me some of them.” So the interview ended. Soon after, the King, referring to it, said: “C’est le plus raisonnable de tous les savants allemands.”

Here is a fable of the comical, satirical sort, entitled “The Ghost”:—

“A housekeeper, I have been told, was long tormented by a ghost. He took lessons in exorcism, and tried his spell on the spirit without effect. A poet came to the house as a lodger, and the host, who dreaded being left alone at night, solicited his company, and begged him to read some of his verses. The poet read a frosty tragedy, which, if it did not interest the host, delighted the author. The ghost, unseen by the poet but visible to the host, appeared and listened. He soon began to



shudder; he could stand but one act, and then vanished. The next night the poet was invited to read again. The spirit appeared, but seeing the situation made no stay. 'Good! thought the host, I will soon be rid of you; it seems you don't like poetry.' The third night our host was alone. As soon as the clock struck twelve the ghost put in his appearance. The host immediately called to his servant, — 'John, run to the poet; ask him to lend me one of his tragedies for awhile.' The ghost was frightened; he signified with a motion of his hand that the servant should not go. Then he vanished, and was never seen again.

"*Moral*: There is no poetry so poor but may be made to answer some good purpose. And if the spirits are afraid of bad poetry, it is a comfort to know that we have enough of it in our time to keep them at bay, though their name were legion."

Gellert's published correspondence, which constitutes a portion of the uniform edition of his works, contains some of his best things, or at least exhibits him (as a man's letters to his friends are apt to do) in the most characteristic light. Here is a letter to a Count somebody, which is interesting both as showing an unlooked-for capability of intense excitement in the sober moralist, and still more, as illustrating the immense enthusiasm which Richardson's novels awakened in the reading world abroad as well as at home. Hear what Gellert says of them and their author: —

DEAR COUNT, — I am beside myself, and I must write and tell you so, though I wrote you only yesterday. Yesterday I had not yet finished the Fifth Part of "Grandison." I read, it is true, until twelve o'clock at night, — a fault which I have not been guilty of before since reading "Clarissa." You may imagine that I slept but little during the night; and this morning I had scarce read my chapter in the Bible when, after six o'clock,

I seized upon "Grandison." . . . I read on until I came to the parting scene between Grandison and Clementine. Ah! Count, dear Count, now I have tasted again the greatest pleasure in life, — the same that I tasted when I read the closing part of "Clarissa." For so many years I have not been able to weep; neither nature nor art could draw tears from me, — my heart has been so hard, so tight. And to-day, this 3d of April, between seven and ten of the clock, I wept. . . . God! what is there in this book? Now I understand how the tragedies of the ancients could produce such mighty, such unfortunate, incredible effects. Yes, Count, not to have been allowed to read on in those moments, not to continue to feel, — there on the grassy bank, here in Clementine's chamber, — rather would I have lost all my property. Is Richardson then a wizard? Everything that can move, that can take by storm, that can ravish, that can charm to intoxication, he has at his command. And can his countrymen for a moment doubt about him? But he must die: he will die, and then they will do him justice. If they buried Gay, on account of some fables, among the graves of their kings, they will do so with Richardson. Immortal name! honor to the human race! prince of novelists! happy tyrant over all our passions! — should they not lay thee among the graves of their kings, by the ashes of their Milton, or in some worthier place if there be one? Write, — but that transcends the powers of human nature, — write another "Grandison," and then die, more blest than thy Clementine, than thy Grandison. Yes, Count — may God forgive me! — Ebert was not wrong when he said that if he had written "Grandison" he would feel sure of his salvation. If heaven could be merited by intelligence and art, by wit and heart, and divine morality, then Richardson has more than merited it. Preserve this letter with all its enthusiasm, with all its sincere folly, and if I die soon let it be printed in large letters, with my whole name, to the honor of Richardson (for when I am dead I shall be great enough to honor him); and add these words: "Let posterity know that two of my happiest days were those on which I read the Seventh Part of 'Clarissa

Harlowe' and the Fifth of 'Sir Charles Grandison.' " . . . I have not been in the habit of praying for Richardson by name, but when I read the Fifth Part I prayed for his continued welfare. I will write no more; I cannot; I am still beside myself; and if I am sick, "Grandison" will be the cause, and my sickness will be Richardson's eulogy.

Gellert died, after long illness and great bodily suffering, in 1769. All Germany mourned the gifted, kindly, blameless man.

## CHAPTER IX.

## KLOPSTOCK.

THE old High-German literature was rich, as we have seen, in epic verse. Modern Germany, less fruitful in that kind, yet boasts one work which in spite of many and great defects maintains, and will always maintain, its place among the world's classics. Inferior to "Paradise Lost" in sensuous imagery and majesty of diction, inferior to the "Gerusalemme Liberata" in sweetness and grace, in warmth and human interest, Klopstock's "Messiah" equals either in poetic valor, in lofty purpose and sustained inspiration, and surpasses both in richness of invention and organic fulness.

Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock was one of the rare cases, rarer then than now, in which fame and fortune — fame for the living subject, wide popularity and ready patronage — combined to smooth and gild a life devoted to letters. Unlike his worthier contemporary Lessing, he was borne by kind hands across the rough places which so many of the scholars and poets of that day were doomed to tread. A sufficient income, conditioned by no drudgery or humiliation, relieved him of those pestering anxieties which the Germans aptly denominate *Brodsorgen* ("Bread-cares"), and allowed ample leisure — the leisure so desirable and so infrequent — for self-chosen tasks.



Born in Quedlinburg, July 2, 1724, Klopstock enjoyed an easy childhood not overburdened with tasks, and received in his native city enough of preparatory drill to enter, at the age of sixteen, — not, however, without close scraping, — the gymnasium of Schulpforte, then a Saxon, now a Prussian seminary, and now, as then, esteemed the foremost institution of its kind in Germany, — a pet of the Prussian government, a State institution, where for native Prussians the tuition is free. From it have emanated some of Germany's most distinguished scholars. They still show at Schulpforte the grotto where, according to tradition, Klopstock meditated the plan of his "Messiah." From personal acquaintance with the uninviting spot, I greatly doubt the tradition. Jean Paul has aimed one of his sarcasms at Klopstock's bequest to the school of a splendid edition of the "Messiah," coupled with the condition that annually the worthiest pupil should strew flowers over the grave of his former master Stubel, and while doing so pronounce softly the name of Klopstock; also, that some scholar, competent to the task, should recite select passages from the poem, for which he was to receive a gold medal which some friend would contribute. Jean Paul stigmatizes this as the poet's worship of himself, — as it were, his "own reliquary full of holy bones." The strewing of flowers, so far as I remember, has become obsolete. To the annual recitation of parts of the "Messiah" I can testify; but no gold medal did I see.

On leaving the school, Klopstock chose for the theme of his valedictory Latin oration, "The highest Aim of Poetry." In 1745 he entered the University of Jena, but soon quitted it in disgust; and in the following year was matriculated at Leipsic ostensibly as a student of

law. Here he became intimate with several literary friends, whose souls were fired with enthusiasm for poetry and transcendental flights of thought, and formed with them a society for mutual encouragement and intellectual stimulus. In such company it was easy for Klopstock to persuade himself of his poetic vocation and superiority to all the poets of his time. Cradled in this belief, the first cantos of the "Messiah" were given to the public; and partly by virtue of their real intrinsic merit, and partly in consequence of the state of German literature at the time, they were received with all the enthusiasm anticipated for them by loving friends. The metre chosen by the poet, after various experiments in other forms, was the hexameter,—then almost as new in German song as it was in English when Longfellow wrote his "Evangeline." Klopstock's hexameters were certainly better than those of his predecessors, but far inferior to those of more recent time, when that measure has become naturalized.

This first instalment of the new epic was hailed with universal delight. Since Luther's translation of the Bible, says one writer, no work in German had been received with such acclaim. Bodmer, in Switzerland, was so charmed that he invited the author to Zurich. There he passed nine happy months on the borders of the lake whose beauties he has celebrated; and there, by good luck, he became acquainted with the Danish minister, von Bernstorff, and through his instrumentality received an invitation from Frederic V., king of Denmark, to take up his abode in Copenhagen, with a salary ample for his wants, and nothing required of him but to write out the rest of the "Messiah" and such other poems as the Muse might inspire. Here he spent twenty

years, during which the greater part of his works were composed. In 1754 he married Margaretha Moller, daughter of a wealthy merchant of Hamburg, having previously, on the plea of indifference, broken with Fanny Schmidt, his earlier love. His union with Miss Moller, known to literature by the name of "Meta," the poetic name conferred upon her by her husband, appears to have been as perfect in all that constitutes the happiness of the nuptial bond as ever falls to the lot of mortals. The four years of their wedded life, as Wordsworth says of his, —

" Were as a day,  
Whose current answers to the heart's desire."

Mrs. Jameson has celebrated their transcendent happiness in her "Loves of the Poets." The wife wrote to Richardson, the English novelist, in 1758, "I am the happiest wife in the world. In a few months it will be four years that I have enjoyed this happiness." Those few months were her last. Four years of full contentment were all that earthly limitations could allow. The poet survived her for nearly half a century, and married again in his sixty-eighth year. In 1771 he left Copenhagen and removed to Hamburg, or rather to Altona in the immediate vicinity of Hamburg, where he spent the remainder of his days, still retaining, as councillor of legation, his Danish pension. He died in his eightieth year, and was buried with great pomp, the cities of Altona and Hamburg uniting in public demonstrations of respect at his obsequies. Representatives of France, Russia, and other nations joined in the funeral procession; passages from his works were read or chanted, and a copy of the "Messiah" was placed by one of the



officiating clergymen in his coffin. Seldom had a poet in those days been so fortunate in life, and so honored in death.

Of Klopstock's person, his manner and conversation, we have the reports of two witnesses, — one who saw him at the height of his powers, and one who visited him in his decline ; both men of supreme mark, the one a German, the other an Englishman, — Goethe, his junior by twenty-five years, and Coleridge, his junior by forty-eight. Goethe, who received him at his father's house in Frankfort, speaks of him thus, in his *Autobiography* : —

“He was a man of diminutive stature, but well built ; his bearing grave and measured ; his conversation to the point, and agreeable. On the whole, his presence had something of the diplomat. Such personages subject themselves to the difficult problem of maintaining at the same time their own dignity and that of a higher to whom they are accountable ; of promoting their own together with the far more important interests of some prince, or it may be of whole States, and of making themselves in this critical position, before all things, agreeable to all men. And so Klopstock appeared to conduct himself as a man of worth, and at the same time as the representative of higher beings, of religion, morality, and freedom. Another peculiarity of men of the world he had also adopted ; namely, that of being slow to speak on precisely those topics on which they are expected and desired to converse. One rarely heard him talk of poetry, or literary topics. But having learned that I and my friends were passionately fond of skating, he conversed with us at length on this noble art, concerning which he had meditated deeply, and well considered what therein is to be attempted and what avoided. But before we could partake of his willing instruction on this subject, he must first set us right respecting the word itself, which it seems we had mistaken. We were accustomed, in good German, to say,



*Schlittschuh* [instead of *Schrittschuh*], which he would by no means allow. 'For the word,' he said, 'was not derived from *Schlitten* ("sled"), as if one moved on little runners, but from *schreiten* ("stride"), because, like the Homeric gods, one strode on these winged soles over the sea as over a floor.' Then he came to speak of the instrument itself; he repudiated the tall, grooved skates, and recommended instead the low, broad, ungrooved Frisian irons as best adapted to rapid motion. . . . I procured for myself, according to his direction, a pair of those flat skates with long beaks, and used them many years, although with some inconvenience. He could also give account — and was pleased to do so — of the art of riding, and even of the training of horses. And thus, as it seemed intentionally, he usually diverted the conversation from his proper calling, in order to speak more freely of other arts which he pursued as an amateur.

"Of these and other peculiarities of this extraordinary man I could say more, if those who have lived longer with him had not already sufficiently informed us on the subject. But I cannot refrain from one observation; namely, this: that men whom Nature has endowed with uncommon gifts, but who have been placed in a narrow or at least not proportionate sphere of action, are apt to fall into oddities, and because they can make no direct use of their gifts, to make them available in strange and extraordinary ways."

Coleridge, in company with Wordsworth, visited Klopstock at his residence in Altona, in the autumn of 1798. In a letter to a lady, he writes: —

"Believe me, I walked with an impression of awe on my spirits as Wordsworth and myself accompanied the brother of Klopstock to the house of the poet, which stands about a quarter of a mile from the city gate. It is one of a row of little commonplace summer-houses (for so they looked), with four or five rows of young, meagre elm-trees before the windows, beyond which is a green, and then a dead flat, intersected with

several roads. Whatever beauty (thought I) may be before the poet's eye at present, it must certainly be purely of his own creation. We waited a few moments in a neat little parlor, ornamented with the figures of two of the Muses, and prints, the subjects of which were from Klopstock's Odes. The poet entered. I was much disappointed in his countenance, and recognized in it no likeness to the bust. There was no comprehension in the forehead, no weight over the eye-brows, no expression of peculiarity, moral or intellectual, in the eyes, no massiveness in the general countenance. He is, if anything, rather below the middle size. He wore very large half boots, which his legs filled, so enormously were they swollen. However, though neither Wordsworth nor myself could discover any indications of sublimity or enthusiasm in his physiognomy, we were both equally impressed with his liveliness and his kind and ready courtesy. He talked in French to my friend, and with difficulty spoke a few sentences to me in English. His enunciation was not in the least affected by the entire want of his upper teeth. The conversation began on his part with the expression of his rapture at the surrender of the French troops under General Humbert. . . . He declared his sanguine belief in Nelson's victory, and anticipated its confirmation with keen and triumphant pleasure. His words, tones, looks, implied the most vehement anti-gallicanism.

"The subject changed to literature, and I inquired in Latin concerning the history of German poetry and the elder German poets. To my very great astonishment, he confessed that he knew very little on the subject. . . . He then talked of Milton and Glover, and thought Glover's blank verse superior to Milton's. Wordsworth and myself expressed our surprise, and my friend gave his definition and notion of harmonious verse: that it consisted — English Iambic blank verse especially — in the apt arrangement of pauses and cadences, and the sweep of whole paragraphs, not in the even flow, — much less in the prominence or antithetic vigor of single lines, which indeed were injurious to the total effect, except where they were introduced for some special purpose. Klopstock assented, and

said that he meant to confine Glover's superiority to single lines. He told us that he had read Milton in a prose translation when he was fourteen. [But] he appeared to know very little of Milton, or of our poets in general. He spoke with great indignation of the English prose translation of his 'Messiah.' All the translations had been bad, but the English translation was no translation at all; there were pages on pages which were not in the original, and half of the original was not in the translation. Wordsworth told him that I meant to translate some of his Odes as specimens of German lyrics; he then said to me, in English, 'I wish you would render into English some select passages of the "Messiah," and revenge me of your countrymen.' It was the liveliest thing which he produced in the whole conversation. He told us that his first Ode was fifty years older than his last. I looked at him with much emotion. I considered him as the venerable father of German poetry, as a good man, as a Christian, seventy-four years old, with legs enormously swollen, yet active, lively, cheerful, and kind and communicative. My eyes felt as if a tear were swelling into them."

But Coleridge proceeds to say, speaking of Klopstock's powdered periwig, "The author of the 'Messiah' should have worn his own gray hair. His powder and periwig were to the eye what *Mr.* Virgil would be to the ear."

Klopstock's fame rests mainly on his Odes and his "Messiah." His dramas, three of which, forming a trilogy, celebrate the first hero of German history,—Hermann the Arminius, who defeated the Romans, commanded by Varus, in the year 9 of the Christian era,—and the rest of which handle Biblical themes. "The Death of Adam," "David and Solomon,"—these dramas are nearly forgotten, although "The Death of Adam" was at one time a stock-piece in the repertory of the German stage, and was thought to compare favor-



ably with the "*Athalie*" of Racine, and with "*Samson Agonistes*."

His Odes are thought by many critics, both native and foreign, — among others, by Taylor, in his "*Survey of German Poetry*," — to constitute the poet's strongest title to immortality. He has been styled the "*German Pindar*." Gervinus says that none of his predecessors had attained to the inspiration of those earlier Odes, which remind one by turns of Horace, of David, and of Ossian. Their most prominent characteristics are the metrical boldness of the form, and the pure and fervid, though sometimes exaggerated, sentiment which furnishes the stuff. In these compositions the author disdains the use of rhyme, and imitates instead the ancient classic metres, to which the German language — though better adapted, because more plastic than the English — lends itself reluctantly, and now and then with a very bad grace, excepting always the hexameter and pentameter. Goethe wrote occasional unrhymed lyrics. But in his there is no imitation of ancient forms, and no precise metre. The metrical law is undefined, and the movement is always graceful, because the measure is not forecast, but adapts itself to the thought or feeling expressed in each clause. In Klopstock's, on the contrary, the measure is first assumed; thought and feeling are cast into a prepared mould, and where the mould does not fit, the language suffers violence, and the verse is awkward. Among them are many noble compositions, in which there is a genuine lift, inspired and inspiring. But sometimes the attempted flight is a miscarriage, resembling (to borrow a figure from Lessing) the attempt of the ostrich, that spreads portentous wings, and never really leaves the



ground. Sometimes, too, when the Muse actually soars her wings suddenly give out; she discovers "an alacrity in sinking," and the pathos of the thought is enhanced by high-flown diction.

I have found these Odes absolutely untranslatable into English, with corresponding metres, without such violation of English idiom as would make the verses absurdly un-English. Their peculiar beauties — beauties that lie in the wording and the phraseology — evaporate in any version. Like all lyric poems, and more than most, to be rightly appreciated they must be read in the original.

An English translator, Mr. Nind, has attempted to solve the metrical problem by rendering these poems in English rhyme. By this method he has produced, no doubt, a volume of more readable verse than he could have made by attempting to reproduce the original metres; but unhappily the English, instead of a translation, is often but a weak paraphrase of the German. For example, the first stanza of the poem on the "Lake of Zurich," literally rendered, reads thus: —

"Beautiful, O Mother Nature! is the splendor of thy invention diffused over the landscape; more beautiful a glad face that thinks the great thought of thy creation over again."

Nind has it: —

"O Mother Nature! beautiful and bright  
Is all thy work o'er mountain, vale, and sea;  
Brighter the eye that drinks delight  
From lofty communings with thee."

Now, "lofty communings with thee" sounds well enough; it is just what any mediocre writer in verse or prose would be likely to say; but "to think the great

thought of creation over again" is a very different thing; it suggests a whole system of philosophy. In fact, it is a saying of wide celebrity, often quoted, though not commonly known to have originated with Klopstock.

The merit of Klopstock's poetry consists in his bold idealism, the inspiration of his thought, and the fervor of his sentiment. His defect is want of sensuousness, of the realism which is quite as necessary to the poet as idealism. Full of poetic feeling, he lacks the poet's eye. His imagination deals with abstractions; he does not represent to himself in sensuous images the objects of his thought. Hence, some absurd conceits. In an Ode entitled "The Two Muses," he represents the British and the German Muse competing for literary honors. The idea is not a bad one; but mark how the poet treats it. Competition — in German, *concurrrenz* — suggests to him *running* for a wager. Accordingly, he figures his two Muses as undertaking a foot-race. There are two goals: the nearest goal is a grove of oaks; the final one a clump of palms. The poet witnesses the start, but prudently confesses himself ignorant of the result.

"The herald sounds! they flew with eagle flight;  
Behind them into clouds the dust was tossed.  
I looked, but when the oaks were passed, my sight  
In dimness of the dust was lost."

Fancy two modest, respectable maidens running at the top of their speed, and kicking up a cloud of dust! As if fleetness of foot decided the question of intellectual supremacy! As if the talent of the Muse, like that of Atalanta, were seated in her heels! Why could not the poet have taken a hint from the old poetic tourna-

ments of the German minnesingers? Why could he not have put a lyre into the hands of each Muse, and let them, agreeably to their vocation, compete with songs instead of their feet?

Whatever may be thought of the Odes, the "Messiah" after all is the work by which Klopstock is best known to the world at large, — and I may say the only one. Those who know nothing else of him, know him to be the author of a great epic poem which bears that name. The "Messiah," as the name imports, is the life of Christ poetically set forth. Around this central thread, which follows in the main the Gospel narrative, are gathered episodes descriptive of imaginary scenes, events in heaven and earth, characters celestial and demonic, which constitute the substance of the poem. The author, according to his own statement, began it at the age of seventeen, but spent three years on the plan before writing a line. Thirty years elapsed before the work was completed. Portions of it were written at intervals, amid other labors, and given to the public in successive instalments. The first three cantos were written in a kind of poetic prose; but the poet could not be satisfied with this form, and was long undecided in what metre to embody his conceptions. Finally, it occurred to him that something might be made of the hexameter. There had been some attempts in that measure in German, but none which seemed to him at all successful. He shut himself up one day, went without his dinner, and from morning till night employed himself in turning a portion of what he had written into hexameter. He was so well satisfied with the success of this experiment, that he at once resolved to cast his epic in that mould.

It would occupy too much space to unfold the plan of the "Messiah." The excellence of the poem consists, not in the plan, which is very faulty, but in the beauty of single parts. It extends through twenty cantos; the eighth brings us to the death of Christ, the remaining twelve being partly occupied with what follows the crucifixion in the Gospel story, but chiefly with imaginary scenes, the creations of the poet's brain, and owing what interest they possess to the splendor of his imagination and the tender pathos of his sentiment. The poem opens with an invocation, not of the Muse, according to traditional custom, which even Milton follows, but, more fitly, of the soul: —

"Sing, immortal Soul! of sinful man the redemption,  
Which the Messiah on earth, in his human nature, accomplished;  
Whereby suffering, slain, and from death to glory exalted,  
Adam's race he atoned and restored to the love of the Godhead.  
Thus the Eternal willed." <sup>1</sup>

He then proceeds, like Milton, to implore the aid of the Holy Spirit in unfolding his theme. Then we are introduced to a scene on the Mount of Olives, where the Redeemer, near the close of his ministry, meets God face to face, and the Father and the Son renew their covenant, — the latter to suffer and die for the sins of mankind, the former to forgive the sins thus atoned.

"Further he spake and said, 'I lift my head toward heaven,  
Lift my hand to the clouds, and thus by myself, thus swear I, —  
I who am God like thee, of man I will be the redeemer.'  
Thus spake Jesus, and raised himself up; sublime was his visage;  
Calm and earnest he stood before God, and full of compassion.  
But, unheard by the angels, alone by himself and the Son heard,

<sup>1</sup> Here we have, in the fourth verse, the *Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βούλη*, from the fourth verse of the first Book of the Iliad.



Spake the eternal Father, while on the Redeemer all-searching  
Rested his vision, and said, 'I spread my head through the  
heavens,  
Stretch my arm through infinity forth, and forever and ever  
I, the Eternal, swear to forgive mankind their transgressions.' "

At this exchange of vows the earth quaked with awe ;  
souls just starting into being, that had not yet begun to  
think, were the first to tremble and feel. The seraph  
Gabriel, the special attendant on Christ, shuddered, and  
the world around him lay in hushed expectation, like  
the earth before the approach of a storm ; gentle rap-  
ture entered the souls of future Christians, and a sweet  
intoxicating sense of eternal life. But the spirits of  
hell, susceptible only of despair, —

" Sank from their thrones to new depths, and, as downward they  
tumbled,  
Fell upon each a rock, and under each the abyss broke  
In with a crash, whence deep hell bellowed reverberant thunder." "

I cite this as a specimen of that "majesty of action" in which it is claimed that this poem excels every other epopee, actual or possible.

The fourth canto — which on the whole is the most spirited, and contains many noble passages — exhibits also one of Klopstock's chief defects, — an extravagance which outruns the sympathy of the reader. The subject is the assembly of the Jewish elders, called by Caiaphas the high-priest to debate the question, what course shall be taken with Jesus, whose growing popularity has alarmed the rulers of the people. Caiaphas addresses the meeting with an eloquent speech, and relates his vision, in which Aaron had appeared to him as he was ministering in the temple, and threatened dreadful penalties on account of the Galilean disturber, who had blasphemed

Moses, and was still permitted to live. He is followed by Gamaliel and Nicodemus, who both plead for the toleration of Jesus. Then Philo, the Pharisee, trembled with rage. His look grew dark; night lay thick around him, and darkness hid from him the assembly. He sprang to his feet, and as in a tempest a single thunder-cloud, more black and charged with lightnings than the rest, separates itself from the mass, and while the others but seize the tops of the cedars, this kindles from one end of the heavens to the other the woody mountains, and with thousand thunders inflames the high-towering, immeasurable cities of kings, and buries them in ruins,—so Philo severed himself from the ranks of his associates. Satan saw him, and said to himself,—

“Devoted to me be thy speaking. As we below consecrate, so consecrate I thee, O Philo! Like the dreaded waters of hell let thy speech stream wildly on, strong as the flaming ocean, winged as with the breath of the thunders which my mouth utters when it commands. . . .

“‘Thus speak, Philo, thus lead this captive people in triumph!

Think, and let thy heart overflow with such thoughts and sensations

As Adra-Melech himself, if a mortal, would not be ashamed of !

Death to the Nazarean doom, and I will reward thee ;

Joys known only to hell shall be thine as soon as his blood flows.

And to us when thou comest, myself thou shalt have for a leader ;

I will bring thee to souls that were heroes, and revelled in carnage.’

Thus spake Satan aside, but the seraph Ithuriel heard him.

Then stood Philo forth and spake as he looked toward heaven.”

The speech which follows is one of great power. It begins with a solemn address to the altar of blood, and to all the altars and holy places of Israel; the speaker washes his hands of all complicity in the doings by

which these have been or may hereafter be polluted; he pronounces maledictions on Nicodemus, on Gamaliel, and all who have favored Jesus, devoting them to a painful death. But his fiercest imprecations are hurled at Jesus himself; he calls upon God to annihilate the transgressor.

“ But thy grimmest wrath, the thunders wherewith thou thunderest,  
Causing the mountains to quake, and hell beneath thee to tremble,  
Take, and therewith smite, O God, that blackest of sinners.”

He threatens, and says : —

“ I have been young, and now I am old; I have served and sacrificed after the manner of my fathers; but if I am doomed to the misery of seeing the Nazarean rebel prevail, then I declare thy eternal covenant to be null, and the blessing promised to Abraham and his seed forever; and in the sight of all Judah I herewith renounce thy justice and thy law. Without thee I will live; without thee my sinking head shall go down to the pit.

“ Yea, if thou dost not sweep from the face of the earth that transgressor,  
Then thou didst not appear to Moses; 't was empty illusion  
All that he thought he saw in the bush in the mountain of Horeb.  
Then thou didst not descend in flames on the summit of Sinai;  
Then no trumpet was heard, no thunder; the mountain, it quaked not;  
Then our fathers and we, through immemorial ages,  
All unblest have been, of all nations most worthy of pity.”

The fifth book describes the visit of Jehovah to Christ in the garden of Gethsemane; and here we have the monstrous conceit of a regular journey of the Almighty from his own abode to the place of action, — a journey

whose length is measured by the spaces which separate sun from sun. A thousand sun-miles have to be traversed, in order that the Father may meet the Son. On the way he encounters a seraph, who is journeying toward heaven with some souls that have just put off their mortal bodies and put on the spiritual. These are the souls of the wise men of the East, who brought their offerings to the infant Jesus. Their names are given, and each one's story is narrated at some length. They are told by the seraph that he who is passing is God, and they immediately break forth in songs of adoration. Then occurs an incident embodying an original and beautiful conception. In the track of the journey lies a planet, the counterpart to our earth, and resembling it in all respects, with the exception that the human beings there have never seen death, but rejoice in immortal youth, — their first parents having withstood the temptation to which Adam and Eve succumbed, and left untasted the forbidden fruit. Their progenitor, — a young man in appearance, though his life comprised so many centuries, — seeing Jehovah pass, apparently bound for earth, points him out to his progeny, and repeats to them the story of our planet, the Fall of Man; and thus opportunity is given for pathetic descriptions of death, and the partings which death involves.

The eighth book, which narrates the Crucifixion, contains, in a famous passage, the description of an eclipse, produced by the star Adamida, the dwelling-place of the souls of the unborn, which Uriel by divine command interposes between the earth and the sun.

The eleventh canto portrays the rising of the bodies of the saints after the Crucifixion, as reported in the Gospel of St. Matthew. Among others Rachel sees,



as in a trance, her own body arise like a cloud from the grave.

“ As of a vernal shower that scatters the snow of its blossoms,  
Rachel’s glory illumed the swimming vapor with lustre,  
Golden and bright as on morning clouds are the fringes of sun-  
shine.

Curious follow her glances; the heaving mist, she beholds it  
Hovering and shapeless as yet; it ascends, sinks, glitters, ap-  
proaches.

Suddenly sounds the omnipotent word; she awakes, and is con-  
scious

Now that her soul has received its immortal and glorified body.”<sup>1</sup>

I pass by the striking things of other cantos. The twentieth and last describes, in intoxicating strains, the ascent of the risen Christ to the Father. It consists largely of songs of praise from angels, prophets, and saints, in varying and difficult metres, and ends with the words,—

“ Thus the Father was seen, thus the Son, by the Heaven of  
Heavens;

Thus in view of the Heaven of Heavens the throne he ascended,  
Jesus Christ, and sat down, the Son at the right of the Father.”

These samples may suffice to convey some impression of the scope and strain of a poem to which has been assigned a very high rank among the enduring monuments of genius, but which holds its place rather by prescription and the judgment of contemporary critics than by the interest felt in it, or any near acquaintance with it, among even native readers of our time.

Klopstock has been called the “German Milton;” Coleridge says, with a covert sneer, “A very German

<sup>1</sup> From W. Taylor’s version, in his “Survey of German Poetry.”

Milton, indeed." But I doubt if Coleridge could establish, with the general consent of the critical world, a canon of poetic art by which the "Messiah" should be judged an inferior work, as compared with "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained." (These two are properly one poem.) The comparison is one which naturally suggests itself, for the reason that both the German and the English poem deal with sacred subjects; both are Christian compositions, — they draw their topics, characters, and scenes from the Christian Scriptures, — and both are native epics. But here the resemblance ends. Further than this they are incommensurable. Both are great in their way, but the ways are different. "Paradise Lost" is great in its massive realism, its level ease, its sensuous imagery, its genial, apt diction, and the sense it gives of reserved force. The "Messiah" is great in its overpowering wealth of imagination, its endless felicity of invention, its lyric daring, its lofty idealism, its sustained inspiration, in which perhaps no poem of equal length can be compared with it. Klopstock is always enthusiastic, Milton always self-possessed. Corresponding with this difference the style of the former is florid to excess, extravagant, and often wearies with its strained hyperbole; the style of "Paradise Lost" is grandly simple, but sometimes falls below the theme and becomes prosy. Milton was certainly the greater, deeper nature, — I am hardly prepared to say, the superior poet; or if superior, the superiority appears in the "Comus" and the "Lycidas" and the minor poems, rather than in the "Paradise Lost." Perhaps we may say that Milton had more of the poet's eye as it manifests itself in the treatment of material nature; Klopstock, more of the poet's soul as manifest in dealing with the moral world.

Milton's poetry was the incidental blossom of an opulent nature ; Klopstock's was the substance of a very limited one. The Englishman had that and a great deal more beside ; the German had that, and nothing else.

One thing I find wearisome in Klopstock, — one thing in which the German poets of that day were too prone to indulge ; that is, an excessive sentimentality. Both in his odes and his epic he is unreasonably lachrymose. Scarcely a page but swims with tears. Even God is represented as weeping. One feels in reading him that the so-called diluvian era in German literature had not yet gone by. The waters were not yet “abated from the face of the earth.”

Neither “Paradise Lost” nor the “Messiah” is much read by the present generation, — the latter perhaps less than the former, and perhaps for the same reason. The grand defect in both is the want of solid ground in human experience, the want of a genuine human interest. They move about in worlds not realized ; they deal with imaginary, I mean superhuman or infra-human, beings, — beings that may be objects of faith, but are too far removed from the sphere of human sympathy to interest us with their doings. Angels and archangels, seraphs and Deity, are scarcely fit subjects for epic handling.

Milton's Satan, indeed, as a being swayed by human passions, is nearer and more real than the heavenly powers, or even than Adam and Eve, and constitutes the central figure and focal interest of “Paradise Lost.” But Klopstock's “Messiah” is too shadowy, too supernatural, to serve as the hero of an epopee. Christian dogma affirms a human as well as a divine nature in Christ. It was therefore open to the poet, without offence to Christian faith, to treat his subject from the human side.

Had he done so, he would have given us instead of a spectre a man, and made, if not a greater, a more interesting poem, and one that would be not only admired but read, — which, even in his own day, Lessing, a friendly critic, complains that the “Messiah” was not. It is true, the great epics of Greek and Roman literature introduce divinities into their plot, and we read the *Iliad* and the *Æneid* with no abatement of interest on that account. The reason is that the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome are simply men and women, inhabiting a different plane and possessing peculiar privileges, but essentially human, in passion and action, — as much so as Ajax or Diomed, or Helen or Hector; and about as real as these. Moreover, the religion which those beings represent is so foreign and indifferent to modern readers, so utterly null, that we can enjoy them without disturbance of any theological sensibilities. But in these Christian epics the enlightened consciousness can hardly fail to be shocked with the sensuous and historic treatment of sanctities transcending space and time, and the matter-of-fact use of dogmatic subtleties which have their place in metaphysical speculation, but are not fit subjects of song. The bold anthropomorphism of Klopstock — whose Deity answers precisely to Matthew Arnold’s “non-natural man” — would be intolerable, did we not look at it from a mythical point of view. We have to forget, not only our own philosophic views, but the representations of the Christian and even of the Jewish Scriptures, to read with complacency of a God who travels from place to place. If we stop to criticise, we turn with disgust from Klopstock’s itinerant Deity to the Hebrew poet’s sublimer conception, — “Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or



whither shall I flee from thy presence?" But what is repellent, conceived as fact, may, if we throw ourselves into it, be enjoyable as myth. Much of what we read, not only in Klopstock and Milton but in other venerable writings, must be taken in that sense if enjoyed at all.

## CHAPTER X.

LESSING.

WHEN literature becomes reflective, and in proportion as it becomes reflective, it changes its constituency from the ignorant many to the cultured few. It is one thing to please the public, another to educate it. A crude and undisciplined taste delights in tawdry sentiment and flashy rhetoric; the instructed mind prefers a severer style, with intimations of reserved power. Thus literature learns to correct itself; a science is formed which discriminates between the true and the false, the tinsel and the gold,—and not only discriminates, but establishes the principles and enunciates the rules by which it judges, and by which we are to judge: æsthetic criticism.

In this science the Germans excel all nations; and in this, the greatest of the Germans is Lessing.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was born in 1729, twenty years before Goethe, who outlived him by half a century. Criticism with him assumes a dignity unknown before, rising to the level almost of creative genius. His “Laocoön; or, The Limits of Poetry and Painting,” written more than a century ago, is still the foremost work of its kind. It initiated a new era in critical science, exploding maxims till then accepted as fundamental truths, especially the *ut pictura poesis* of the

ancients, — that painting is silent poetry, and poetry vocal painting. It set the direction and defined the principles which sound criticism has followed ever since, and must always follow.

But Lessing was something more than a critic; he was an emancipator. He is rightly named the “second Luther,” — his country’s deliverer intellectually, as Luther was spiritually. He emancipated German literature once and forever from the thralldom of French taste, against which Gellert and Klopstock had striven in vain. In fact, German literature as we know it — the modern native literature of Germany — dates with him. He delivered science from the bondage of tradition, theology from the bondage of the letter, and the life of men of letters from the bondage of Philistinism. One quality above all others distinguished him, and distinguished him above all others, — unadulterated love of truth, incorruptible integrity of mind, absolute sincerity. Personified Justice is pictured in our courts as holding with bandaged eyes an even balance: Lessing’s eyes no prejudice could bandage, and no partiality blind; and his balance was always even. The thing he most hated in men of letters was one-sidedness; the thing he could least tolerate was intolerance. “It is not error that injures,” he said, “but sectarian error.” Whoever has heard about him at all has probably heard of that famous saying of his, — that if God were to offer him all truth in the right hand, and the never-tiring search of truth in the left, with the privilege of choice between the two, he would choose the left. The saying is very characteristic. His own life was such a search. Modern literature knows no more devoted champion of spiritual truth, — a literary Bayard, without fear and

without reproach. He passed for a rationalist; his theological writings, including the "Education of the Human Race," contain the germs of all that rational criticism has since achieved in the way of religious enlightenment and theological emancipation. But he was no iconoclast; the bigotry of Rationalism was as hateful to him as the bigotry of Orthodoxy. He could discern, and has finely stated, the ground of reason that underlies the doctrine of the Trinity. He could even defend Leibnitz's recognition of the dogma of eternal punishment as embodying an element of truth. No iconoclast; his acuteness in detecting, his boldness in exposing, error were balanced by an equal reverence for all the sanctities of history and life. More than all, he was a scholar, broadly and profoundly learned,—the Casaubon, the Scaliger of his day, who grubbed in libraries and made discoveries; yet no pedant, but a grub of the sort that can turn to a butterfly,—pre-eminently the scholar-poet.

The lives of most literary men in times past present a tragical aspect, if we compare their talents with their fortunes, the worth of their work with their worldly success. In our day literary labor, excepting that of the highest order, is well paid,—perhaps overpaid, in comparison with other more needful work. And the tragedy is nowadays, not that genius starves, but that so much money is lavished on writing where no genius is,—on trashy stories, sensational lectures, trivial verses, and wordy gossip, and magazine-rubbish,—which apparently sells, since it persists to litter the land. Even in our day a genius like that of Lessing would fail of its dues in the way of material compensation; but it would, at the least, command a sufficient



material support. In his day it was different ; and the life of Lessing exhibits, in a more than ordinary degree, the tragic character of which I speak. A ceaseless struggle it was with parental prejudice, with adverse opinion, theological persecution, and bitter penury. His father, a Lutheran clergyman of the ancient orthodox stamp, had set his heart on Gotthold's following in his steps ; but Gotthold, at Leipsic, where most of the professors knew less than himself, became acquainted with the theatre, frequented it, even wrote for it, kept company with actors,—and that at a time when actors were thought to be without the pale of salvation, and were denied Christian burial. At home, in Kamentz, the report of these things — exaggerated, of course, by officious tale-bearers, and representing the young student as intending himself to go upon the stage — created an alarm which prompted an immediate recall. But would the youth consent to forego such attractions ? Would he not, under one or another pretext, remain, and contract still deeper contamination ? There was one thing that would fetch him, and the exigency seemed to warrant a pious fraud. The father wrote : “ Immediately on the receipt of this, take the first post and come home ; your mother is dangerously ill, and would see you once more before she dies.” Lessing did not hesitate ; he started at once in the depth of winter, without an overcoat. No sooner was the letter despatched than the weather turned unusually severe, and the tender mother's heart was filled with new fears ; the play-house was bad, but that her Gotthold should freeze was a good deal worse. She hoped against hope that he would not obey the summons ; and when he entered the house, benumbed with cold, she exclaimed, “ Why did you come in this fearful

weather?" "Dear mother, you wished it. I am glad you are not sick; I hardly believed you were."

During this visit, prolonged to the close of the winter, Lessing's parents endeavored in vain to dissuade him from what he considered to be his true vocation, — the profession of Letters. In conformity with their desire he suffered himself, on his return to Leipsic, to be enrolled as a student of medicine; but the life which he thenceforth embraced in the face of all discouragements, and which in spite of all vexations, disappointments, persecutions, poverty, and loss he pursued to the end, was that of *littérateur*. As a writer for the stage, as translator by the job, as *feuilletoniste*, antiquary, original investigator, learned essayist, in Leipsic and Berlin; as government secretary in Breslau, as theatrical critic in Hamburg, as librarian of the ducal library in Wolfenbüttel, — he labored, fought, and suffered through thirty-three years with only once or twice a transient gleam of satisfaction, which but served to throw into deeper relief the thick and ever-thickening shadows of his ill-starred, unblest way, — always, in his own and his friends' expectation, on the eve of some lucrative post congenial with his gifts, and always disappointed; or, if holding such post for a brief term, losing it again, as at Hamburg, before he was fairly settled in it, by no fault of his own. Openings of promise, which his great reputation seemed to have made for him, closed, upon nearer approach, to his tantalized grasp. Would-be patrons cheated him of the salary by the offer of which they had lured him to their side. Frederick the Great, who ought to have found a place for the greatest intellect in his kingdom, was restrained from so doing by the stupid presumption that Germany could produce nothing in the

literary line that deserved to be patronized. It must have been with special reference to Lessing that Schiller said of the German Muse, —

“ Von dem grössten deutschen Sohne,  
Von des grossen Friedrich's Throne,  
Ging sie schutzlos, ungeehrt.”

By the death of the keeper of the royal library, in 1765, an office became vacant, which Lessing's friends endeavored to obtain for him, and which, if obtained, would have yielded, not an ample indeed, but an adequate support. Connected with this office was that of custodian of the royal cabinet of coins and antiquities. There were two men in Europe at that time, above all others, especially fitted for the double office. One of them was Lessing, the other was Winckelmann. It was offered to Winckelmann, with the promise at first of a salary of fifteen hundred or two thousand thalers. But when Winckelmann signified his acceptance, the mistaken economy of the king proposed to reduce the salary by one half. Then Winckelmann indignantly withdrew, and the claims of Lessing were strenuously urged, — among others, by Guichard, an intimate friend of the king, who, though a Frenchman, understood that no countryman of his own, or of any other country, could compete with Lessing in the erudition demanded for the office in question. He told the king, who expressed his distrust of the Germans and his preference for the French, that if he would not take a German he must go without a sufficient man for the office, inasmuch as thorough scholars like Lessing were no longer to be found among the French or other nations. His indiscreet zeal ruined his cause. The king persisted in depre-



ciating the Germans, and extolled the superior learning of the Benedictines of St. Maur. Lessing he would not have, but imported a librarian from Paris, one Pernety, who proved — as Wilken, historian of the library of Berlin, relates — entirely incompetent for the work required; moreover, he was addicted to all sorts of superstitions, alchemy, and ghost-seeing, and finally resigned his post because some preacher had prophesied the coming end of the world, a catastrophe which was to begin in the province of Brandenburg. He returned to France in 1783, and there, in the words of Stahr, he did indeed behold the destruction of a world, although of a very different one from that intended by the prophet.

This was one of the frequent, swift-succeeding disappointments which made the life of Lessing a prolonged tragedy. In spite of philosophy, there is such a thing as luck, and the want of it. The inequalities of fortune are never more glaring, and never more perplexing, than when great gifts and extraordinary merit can find no place and no remunerative work, while mediocrity occupies important posts with unprofitable service. In such cases the law of compensation hides itself, and our only defence against doubt of divine rule is the faith that somewhere and somehow the balance is made even, or at least that scanty having is repaired by superior being.

The best of Lessing's contemporaries — men like Wieland, Gleim, Mendelssohn, Kleist — were with him and for him; but they were few and without means. They could do nothing for him but recommend him for offices which he never obtained. On the other hand, the mediocre men, whose prejudices he did not share, whose traditions he could not follow, were against him. For them it was



enough that he was a genius. Genius is the one thing that mediocrity can never forgive.

Among the other tragedies of Lessing's life was the loss of a beloved wife in the second or third year of their marriage, after a betrothal of six forlorn years, in which poverty and other troubles had delayed their union. She died after giving birth to a child,—a birth which required the use of surgical instruments. The child breathed but twenty-four hours ; the mother followed in two or three days. The union, while it lasted, had been one of singular fitness and mutual delight. It had given Lessing the one gleam of sunshine, the one green spot, in a life of storm and woe. Soon after the death of his child, while his wife lay senseless, he wrote to his friend Eschenburg, with that ghastly wit which extreme grief will sometimes wring from the soul,—

“My joy was brief, and I was sorry to lose him, this son of mine ; he had so much sense ! Oh, so much sense ! Do not think that the few hours of my paternity have made me such an ape of a father. I know what I am talking about. Was it not a proof of his sense that they were obliged to drag him into the world with a forceps ; that he so soon became disgusted with his new abode ? Was it not a proof of sense that he seized the first opportunity to be off again ? I had wished just for once to have some comfort like other people, but it has turned out badly for me.”

Hegel, commenting on this calamity, says : —

“Should we not think that if one could foresee such a destiny, he would choose an earlier death than Nature intended ? Undoubtedly Lessing would have greatly preferred an earlier death ; he was weary enough of the burden of life, but he would not anticipate the end. ‘I set my teeth,’ he said, ‘and let the boat drift at the mercy of the winds and waves. Enough that I will not of myself capsize it.’ ”

It was in the midst of this affliction that the bigot Götze, a Hamburg divine, assailed Lessing with coarse invective, and even invoked against him the wrath of the secular power for having published some fragments found in the Wolfenbüttel library which were thought to war against the Christian religion. Duty to himself, and to what he considered the cause of spiritual freedom, constrained him to gird up his soul for this new controversy; and in dealing with Götze, whom his satire has damned to everlasting fame, and in the composition of "Nathan the Wise," the crown of his literary labors, he found an anodyne, if not the cure, for his woes. He had not long to wait for that cure, complete and final. Three years after the death of his wife, in 1781, in his fifty-third year, he laid down the life which had brought so much labor and sorrow to himself, and borne such imperishable fruit to the world.

Lessing's death was a shock to all his literary friends, who were hoping from the pen that had given so much still better things to come. But the loss of his wife and child, though it could not arrest his literary labors, had dried the springs of his animal life and wrought in the man of fifty a premature decline. He died so poor that the Duke of Brunswick, in whose service he had labored, was compelled to defray the expenses of his burial. So ended the slow tragedy of that baffled, broken, blasted life. To the everlasting shame of the princes of his day and country, it stands recorded — a record which no subsequent honors awarded to his memory can efface — that the foremost scholar of the eighteenth century died a pauper. When in after years it was proposed to erect a monument to his name, so completely had all knowledge of the resting-place of his remains passed away, that

Dr. Schiller with difficulty succeeded in finding, "hidden among weeds and briers, a little headstone which, cleared of earth and moss, revealed the name of Lessing." Theological hatred pursued him beyond the bier. In Hamburg the censors of the press forbade the newspapers to print any tribute to his memory. But the best intellects in Germany bewailed his loss with grief unfeigned. It was felt that life and strength had gone out with his death; and the oldest poet then living wrote: —

"Him have we lost who was our greatest pride,  
Him who abroad had won our nation fame.  
God said, Let there be light, and Leibnitz came;  
God said, Let darkness be, and Lessing died."

Mendelssohn, his life-long friend, wrote to his brother, Karl Lessing: —

"All things considered, your brother, my friend, departed at just the right time. At the right time not only in relation to the plan of the universe, — for in that relation nothing is untimely, — but also at the right time in relation to this our sphere, which has scarcely a span's breadth. Fontenelle says of Copernicus, 'He made known his new system, and died.' The biographer of your brother will be able to say, 'He wrote "Nathan the Wise," and died.' I can form no conception of a work which should be as much superior to 'Nathan the Wise' as that is superior in my view to everything else that Lessing wrote. He could mount no higher without entering a region where he would be lost to our sight. This he has done. And we, like the disciples of the Prophet, stand and gaze at the spot where he ascended and disappeared. A few weeks before his death I had occasion to write to him, and I said that he must not be surprised if the great mass of his readers should fail to recognize the merits of that work, and that a better generation fifty years after his death would find enough to do to chew and

digest it. Indeed, he had outstripped his age by more than one generation."

The writings of Lessing may be classed under four heads, — Critical, Poetical, Theological, and Bibliographical.

Of the critical, the most important are the "Laocoön" and the "Hamburgische Dramaturgie" (criticisms of dramatic writers). Under the poetical I include, together with the smaller poems, the plays and the fables. The larger part, and the best part, of the fables are prose compositions, as indeed are the plays, with the exception of "Nathan the Wise." But being works of art, — artistic fictions, — I do not hesitate to rank them as poetry. The author excuses the want of metrical form in the introductory fable.

The theological writings are partly controversial, called forth by the publication of the so-called "Wolfenbüttel Fragments," works of a deistical character, by an anonymous author; partly dissertations suggested by those Fragments, and partly they consist of miscellaneous essays, such as the "Christianity of Reason" and the "Education of the Human Race," — which, brief as they are, contain the germs, as I have said, and were the pioneers of the more advanced theology of recent time.

The class which I have designated bibliographical embraces all that is not included in the other three, — results of life-long studies, researches, and discoveries among the treasures of the Wolfenbüttel Library, of which the author was custodian. One curious volume bears the title, "Rettungen," — literally "Rescues," — vindications of writers from imputations and reproaches which have long attached to their name.



Never, perhaps, in the history of literature has a writer, by mere expression of opinion, by simple judgment of other's doings, independently of his own creations, exerted such influence as Lessing. Whatever the merits of his dramatic and other original compositions, it was mainly by his critical writings that he became the power he was and is in the world of letters. Lord Macaulay pronounced him beyond dispute the best critic that Europe has produced. And what was true in relation to the writers of the eighteenth century, whom Macaulay had in mind, is equally true in relation to the writers of the nineteenth. In the hundred years that have elapsed since Lessing's death, there has arisen no one to dispute his supremacy in that line. In accordance with that character, the most pronounced faculty in his mental composition was the power of discrimination, the judging power, — *Urtheilskraft*.

It is noticeable in this connection that Lessing was the first of continental critics to claim for Shakspeare that supreme rank among poets which the universal voice now accords to him. Scarcely, indeed, had any English writer then ventured to speak of him with eulogy so unqualified. By a curious coincidence, Dr. Johnson and Lessing, each in his own country the foremost *littérateur* of his day, were writing about Shakspeare at the same time, in 1768, — Lessing, in his dramatic criticisms at Hamburg, in which he repeatedly refers to the great master, and Johnson, in his well-known Preface to his edition of Shakspeare's works, in which he strangely affirms, intending it for praise, that while "in the writings of other poets a character is often an individual, in those of Shakspeare it is commonly a species." Pope, with far deeper discernment,

wrote, that Shakspeare's characters were nearly all individuals. Johnson has many deductions to make from the merit of his subject; but he does say, grandly, that "the stream of Time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakspeare." Lessing, who had previously declared that of all poets since Homer, Shakspeare was the one who had looked human nature through and through, takes occasion to say, in his critique of Weisse's "Richard III.," whose author disclaimed having plagiarized Shakspeare, that such disclaimer presupposes that Shakspeare can be plagiarized. "But what was said of Homer — that you might sooner deprive Hercules of his club than take a single line from the Iliad or the Odyssey — is especially applicable to Shakspeare: on the meanest of his beauties a mark is set, which proclaims to the world, 'I am Shakspeare's;,' and woe to any other beauty that would dare to appear beside it!"

Lessing had a talent for satire, which he seldom indulges, and which, when indulged, is not of the bitter but the playful sort, as in his controversy with Götze, whose ignorance and blunders he exposes with a half compassionate raillery. This satirical propensity is more conspicuous in his earlier efforts; it inspired many of his fugitive poems, and appears occasionally in his fables. To appreciate the following *morceau*, it must be borne in mind how largely German literature, mistrusting its own vocation, occupied itself with imitation of foreign models: —

"Said the ape to the fox, 'Name to me an animal so clever that I cannot imitate.' The fox answered, 'Name to me an

animal so insignificant that would think of imitating you.' Writers of my country, need I express myself more plainly?"

A more questionable sarcasm is embodied in the Fable of the Furies: —

"Said Pluto to the messenger of the gods, 'My Furies are getting old and dull; I must have a fresh supply. Go, then, Mercury, and procure for me in the upper world three doughty women for that office.' Mercury went. Shortly after, Juno said to her handmaid, 'Do you think, Iris, that you could find for me, among the race of mortals, three perfectly strict and chaste maidens? But perfectly strict they must be, you understand. I wish to throw scorn on Cythera, who boasts that she has the whole sex in subjection. Go and see if you can find them.' Iris went. In what corner of the earth did she not search; but all in vain. She returned unattended. Juno met her with the exclamation, 'Is it possible? O chastity! O virtue!' 'Goddess,' said Iris, 'I might have brought you three maidens who were all perfectly strict and chaste; the three had never smiled upon a man; all three had stifled every spark of love in their hearts; but, unfortunately, I came too late.' 'Too late!' quoth Juno, 'how so?' 'Mercury had just got hold of them for Pluto.' 'For Pluto! And what does Pluto want of these virtuous maidens?' 'He wants them for Furies.'"

Lessing's fables bear the stamp of his peculiar genius. Even here the critic predominates. They are more epigrammatic, less didactic, less historic than those of other fabulists. There is in them less of observation and more of reflection than in most compositions of the kind. In most fables the story seems to have been first conceived, and the moral to be a reflection upon it. In those of Lessing the story is more obviously invented to illustrate a foregone thought. One or two specimens may serve as examples: —

## THE WASPS.

Corruption had befallen the noble structure of a war-horse which had been shot beneath his rider. Ever-working Nature employs the ruins of one being for the life of another. And so a swarm of young wasps arose from the carrion. "Oh," cried the wasps, "how divine is our origin! The magnificent horse, the favorite of Neptune, is our progenitor." The observant fabulist heard this strange boast, and it reminded him of the modern Italians, whose conceit it is that they are nothing less than descendants of the old immortal Romans, because they were born among their graves.

## THE WOLF ON HIS DEATH-BED.

The wolf lay at the last gasp, and cast a searching look on his past life. "It is true I am a sinner," he said, "but I trust not one of the worst. I have been guilty of some wrong acts, but I have also done many good ones. I remember how once a bleating lamb, that had strayed from the flock, came so near to me that I might have throttled it; but I did not harm it. At the same time I heard, with the most astonishing indifference, the mocking taunts of a sheep, although I had nothing to fear from protecting dogs." "I can testify to all that," said his friend, the fox, who was helping him prepare for death; "I remember all the circumstances of the case: it was when you were choking so horribly with that bone which afterward the good-natured crane extracted from your throat."

## THE BLIND HEN.

A hen, which had become blind, being accustomed to scratch for food, continued the operation after the loss of her sight. What did it avail the industrious fool? Another hen, who had the use of her eyes, and wished to spare her tender feet, kept close to her side, and had all the benefit of the scratching. As often as the blind hen turned up a corn, the seeing one devoured it. The industrious German collects the materials which the witty Frenchman uses.



Lessing was too thorough a critic, and too wise and modest a man, not to be able to criticise himself. With the same measure with which he meted to others, he could measure his own writings and pronounce upon their worth. In the exercise of this self-criticism he disclaimed for himself the title of poet. He says : —

“ It is true, men have sometimes done me the honor to rank me in that class ; but they have misconceived me. . . . I do not feel springing within me the living fountain which struggles forth of its own force, and by its own force shoots up in rich, fresh, and pure streams. I have to squeeze everything out of myself by pressure and pipes. . . . I have therefore always been shamed or vexed when I have heard or read anything in dispraise of criticism. It has been said to stifle genius, and I had flattered myself that I had derived from it something which approaches very near to genius.”

It is certainly true that Lessing lacks some of the qualities which we are accustomed to associate with the name of poet ; and if these be rigorously insisted on as indispensable to constitute a member of the craft, he can hardly be said to come within the line which separates poetry from prose. The understanding is disproportionately active in him ; passion is weak ; of fancy, of poetic feeling, there is almost nothing. He is no singer, and no orator ; he seems to have no perception of the charm of rhythm or of eloquence. There is not in all his writings what might be called a melodious strain or a stirring speech ; no glow, and no sweetness. With the exception of some passages of enlivening wit, all is cold, hard, dry. We have the frame-work of a poem, the bony structure, with too little filling of flesh and blood. But, on the other hand, if the power of literary invention, of pure creation, — if the faculty of apt characterization,

founded on correct observation of human life ; if the production of a work of fiction, a rounded whole, in which the parts are nicely adjusted, the characters natural, the plot well contrived, and which, after the lapse of a century, still holds its place in the admiration of the reader, — if these things entitle a man to be called a poet ; if a poet be defined according to the literal meaning of the word, *a maker*, — then surely Lessing may rank as such.

German literature is indebted to him for some of its best dramatic works. His “*Minna von Barnhelm*” struck out a new path in the line of local comedy, and exerted a marked influence on the mind of the period when it appeared.

A work of far greater importance, one of the choicest gems of modern dramatic art, is his “*Emilia Galotti*,” a tragedy which is still a favorite on the German stage. This play is remarkable for the simplicity of its plot, the close connection of all its parts, its apt characterizations, and the onward sweep and cumulative force of its action, which occupies but a few consecutive hours. The catastrophe is borrowed from the story of the Roman commoner who slays his daughter to save her from the clutches of a licentious noble. But here the resemblance ends. All the circumstances are different ; in this case the father but follows the suggestion and executes the will of his victim.

An Italian prince, sovereign of a petty realm, at a time when princes possessed unlimited, irresponsible power, falls in love with a young maiden, Emilia, daughter of Odoardo Galotti. The new passion deprives his mistress, the Countess Orsina, of the place she has held in his affections ; a letter from her requesting an inter-

view at his villa in Dosalo remains unread. He learns that Emilia is betrothed to Count Appiani, and that the very day on which the action of the play begins is to be their wedding-day. His confidant, Marinelli, the unscrupulous pander to his vices, suggests to him the possibility of preventing the marriage and getting possession of the bride. The prince empowers him to take such measures as he may deem needful to accomplish this end. Accordingly, Marinelli engages a *bravo* with his accomplices to attack the carriage which is to convey Appiani, Emilia, and her mother to the wedding, as it passes Dosalo, the country residence of the prince. The father, Odoardo, is to come later on horseback. The attack is made. Appiani, against whom Marinelli has a personal grudge, is killed. The mother and daughter, supposing the assailants to be robbers, seek refuge in the nearest dwelling, not knowing it to be the castle of the prince, who has thus, as he imagines, secured his victim. The carriage with the body of Appiani returns to the city. Odoardo, who was to follow after, hears of the catastrophe, and, without suspecting its author and motive, spurs on to the castle in quest of his wife and daughter. There, before he is admitted to their presence, he encounters the Countess Orsina, who has come to Dosalo expecting the interview with the prince which she had requested in her unopened letter, and has learned from Marinelli what has happened. Her jealousy suspects a rival in Emilia, and puts the right interpretation on the slaughter of Appiani and the capture of the bride. She imparts her suspicion to Odoardo, who secretly prepares himself for the worst. The prince meets him with great affability and a show of warm sympathy, affects to condole with him, and regrets the pretended necessity

of detaining Emilia as a witness in the trial by which the murder of Appiani is to be investigated and avenged. The mother had already returned to the city in company with the Orsina, at Odoardo's request, and was to send a carriage for her daughter. The father sees through the plot,—a devilish device of Marinelli,—but restrains himself and requests a private interview with his daughter, which is accorded to him. The meeting between parent and child is one of deep sorrow, but awakens in both stern resolve. Both are convinced of the hopelessness of her position, of the impossibility of escaping the machinations of the prince and his pander. At last Emilia reminds Odoardo of the story of Virginius, and regrets in a tone of reproach that such fathers are no longer to be found in the world. Odoardo assures her that the race is not extinct, and plunges his dagger in her breast.

One of the best drawn characters in the play is the Countess Orsina, the former mistress of the prince. She had written to him to meet her at Dosalo, but the prince, possessed by his new passion, has lost his interest in her, and has not even read her letter. She comes to Dosalo, expecting an interview with her lover, and is met in an antechamber by Marinelli. She is about to pass on, when Marinelli stops her.

*Mar. (holding her back).* Whither would you, my lady?

*Ors.* Where I ought to have been long since. Do you think it is proper for me to be bandying words with you in the antechamber, while the Prince expects me in yonder apartment?

*Mar.* You are mistaken, my lady. The Prince does not expect you. He cannot; he will not meet you here.

*Ors.* And yet he is here,—here in consequence of my letter?

*Mar.* Not in consequence of your letter.



*Ors.* You say he received it.

*Mar.* Received, but did not read it.

*Ors. (with vehemence).* Did not read it? (*More gently.*) Did not even read it?

*Mar.* I am sure it was from absent-mindedness, not from contempt.

*Ors. (haughtily).* Contempt! Who supposes that? To whom do you find it necessary to say that? You are an impudent comforter, Marinelli! Contempt! Am I a person to be despised? (*In milder tones, with a touch of sadness.*) It is true, he no longer loves me. That is decided. And in the place of love there came into his soul something else. That is natural. But why must it be contempt? It need only be indifference. Is it not so, Marinelli?

*Mar.* Certainly! certainly!

*Ors. (mockingly).* Certainly? Oh, the wise man whom one can make say what one will! Indifference! Indifference in the place of love. That is, nothing in the place of something. For you shall know, you mimicking little courtier, — you shall learn from a woman, — that indifference is an empty word, a mere sound, to which nothing answers. The soul is indifferent only to that which is not in its thought, — only to that which is nothing to it. And to be indifferent only to a thing which is *no thing* is the same as not being indifferent at all. Am I too high for you, man?

*Mar.* Who does not know, my lady, that you are a philosopher?

*Ors.* Am I not? Yes, yes, I am one. But now I have let it be seen that I am one. Oh, fie! if I have let it be seen, is it strange that the Prince despises me? How can a man love a thing that, in spite of him, will think? A woman who thinks is as disgusting as a man who paints. She must laugh, do nothing but laugh, in order to keep the stern lord of creation in perpetual good humor. Well, then, what shall I laugh at in a hurry, Marinelli? Ah, yes, at the accident of my writing to the Prince to come to Dosalo, — at his not reading my letter, and yet coming to Dosalo! Ha! ha! Really, a curious acci-

dent! Very funny! very droll! And you do not join in my laugh, Marinelli? Surely, the stern lords of creation may laugh with *us*, though we must not think with *them*. (*Serious and commanding.*) Laugh, I tell you!

*Mar.* Presently, my lady, presently.

*Ors.* Blockhead! And meanwhile the opportunity slips by. No, do not laugh. For look you, Marinelli, what makes me laugh so heartily has also its grave, very grave side, like everything else in the world. Accident! Did I say it was an accident that the Prince did not think of meeting me here, and yet is forced to meet me? Believe me, Marinelli, the word accident is blasphemy! Nothing under the sun is accidental, — least of all that of which the design is so apparent. Almighty, all-merciful Providence, forgive me, that to this foolish sinner I called that an accident which is so evidently thy work! (*Impatiently to Marinelli.*) Take care how you tempt me again to such wickedness.

[*The Prince enters; he crosses the hall without stopping, saying, as he passes,*]

*Prince.* See there, our fair Countess! How sorry I am, Madame, that I cannot avail myself, to-day, of the honor of your visit. I am busy; I am not alone. Another time, my dear Countess, another time. At present, do not stop, — do not wait, on no account. And you, Marinelli, I am expecting you. [*Exit.*]

*Mar.* There, my lady, you have it from his own lips what you would not take from mine. . . .

*Ors.* Busy! Not alone! Is that all the apology I am thought worthy of? Whom does one not dismiss with such excuses? Any bore, any beggar. No additional lie for me? Not one little lie more for me? Busy! — about what? Not alone! — who is with him? Come, Marinelli, for pity, dear Marinelli, tell me a lie on your own account! A lie, you know, costs you nothing. What is his business? Who is with him? Tell me; say the first thing that comes into your mouth, and I will go.

Marinelli then tells her that Count Appiani, who as she has heard has been shot by robbers, was to have been married that day to Emilia Galotti, then present with the prince. She immediately suspects the plot, and believes the prince to have been the real author of the murder.

*Ors. (clapping her hands).* Bravo! bravo! I could kiss the devil who has tempted him to commit this deed.

*Mar.* Whom? Tempted? To what deed?

*Ors.* Yes, I could kiss him, even if you were that devil yourself, Marinelli! Come, look me straight in the eye.

*Mar.* Well.

*Ors.* Do you not know what I think?

*Mar.* How can I?

*Ors.* Had you no hand in it?

*Mar.* In what?

*Ors.* Swear! No, don't swear; you might be guilty of another sin. Yes, on the whole, swear away! One sin, more or less, for a man who is damned at any rate, — what signifies it? Had you no hand in it?

*Mar.* You frighten me, Countess.

*Ors.* Really? Does your good heart suspect nothing? Well, then, I will tell you something that shall make every hair on your head stand up. Come here! [*She advances her mouth to his ear as if to whisper, but screams at the top of her voice.*] The Prince is a murderer!

*Mar.* Countess, are you out of your senses?

*Ors.* Out of my senses? (*Laughing aloud.*) Ha! ha! ha! I have seldom or never been so well satisfied with my senses as now. Depend upon it, Marinelli; but it is between us two. (*Whispers.*) The Prince is a murderer, — the murderer of Count Appiani! . He was not slain by robbers, but by tools of the Prince, — by the Prince. . . .

*Mar.* Countess, it might cost you your head —

*Ors.* If I should say that to others. So much the better! so much the better! To-morrow I will proclaim it in the

market-place. And whoever contradicts me, he was the Prince's accomplice. Good-by!

“Nathan the Wise” is neither comedy nor tragedy in the common acceptation, but a grand dramatic picture, in which the interest resides not so much in the plot or the action, as in the self-portrayal of the characters and the truth of the sentiment, — or rather the value of the truth they are made to illustrate. The motive is religious tolerance; and in no other poem, in all the range of literature, has the virtue of tolerance found such adequate expression, such apt vindication. On the whole, though ill-adapted to the stage, though wanting in theatrical effect, and without the qualities which secure a wide popularity, — such popularity as the author obtained for his “*Emilia Galotti*,” — “Nathan the Wise” must be regarded as Lessing’s greatest work, as it was his last; greatest, I mean, of his original creations. It is the one which best represents the author’s innermost self, a spirit above all parties and sects and ecclesiastical limitations; believer in the one universal religion, — the religion of love for God and man; too wise and broad to be the votary of any exclusive creed. It is, next to “*Faust*,” the most truly German, the most thoroughly national work. Moreover, it is the only one of Lessing’s plays in which he has adopted the metrical form. But so slight is his perception of rhythmical beauty that nothing is gained by his rugged verses. The scene of this drama is laid in Jerusalem; the time is the third crusade, — or rather the truce between Christian and Musulman which succeeds that crusade. The principal characters are Saladin, renowned in the history of that age; Nathan, a wealthy Jewish merchant; a Knight Templar, and the Patriarch of Jerusalem. These rep-



resent the three monotheistic religions which, previous to our knowledge of India, were supposed to be the great religions of the world, — Judaism, Christianity, and Mahometanism. The intent is to show that names and forms and confessions are of no importance, compared with those fruits of the Spirit, those moral graces, which constitute the sole criterion of a true religion. In accordance with this design, the Christian ecclesiastic is represented, as in that age he was likely to be, the least Christian of the three, — bigoted, ambitious, relentless, cruel. The Mahometan sovereign is a man of large and liberal views; and the despised Jew, compassionate, tolerant, humane, — the real Christian, as the lay-brother, when he hears the story of his wrongs and good deeds, confesses: “Nathan, you are a Christian; a better Christian never was.” A party of Christian fanatics had massacred his wife and seven sons; but he had, nevertheless, adopted a Christian orphan, thrown upon his mercy, and brought her up as his own child. The bigoted patriarch, hearing of this, would have him burned at the stake, because the girl had not been reared in the Christian faith. At the close of the piece her parentage comes to light; her mother was a Christian, but her father was Saladin’s brother, and her lover, the Templar, turns out to be her own brother.

A story from Boccaccio, which suggested the drama, is inwoven in the course of the action. The Sultan, thinking to entrap Nathan, demands of him which of the three religions — the Jewish, the Mahometan, or the Christian — he regards as the true one. Nathan, divining his purpose, begs time for consideration. Having debated the matter with himself, he answers Saladin’s question with the story of the three rings.

*Nathan.* An eastern monarch, in ancient time, possessed a ring of inestimable value, which had the property of making the wearer, who wore it with that faith, beloved of God and man. This ring he bequeathed to his favorite son, with the provision that he should leave it again to his favorite ; and that thus it should descend from sire to son, and that in each generation the son who inherited the ring should be the prince of the house. Agreeably to this provision, the ring came at last into the hands of a father of three sons, of whom each was equally dear to him ; and to each of whom, separately, unknown to the other two, he had weakly promised the ring and the succession. That he might not seem to either of the sons false to his promise, he had employed a skilful jeweller to make two fac-similes of the hereditary ring ; and so perfect was the workmanship that these spurious rings were not distinguishable, even by the father himself, from the true one. On his death-bed he summons privately each of his sons, one after the other, and delivers to him one of the rings, as if it were the true one and carried the succession. Scarcely was the father dead when each of the sons comes forward with his ring, and each claims to be chief of the house. Investigations are made : they quarrel, they prosecute, in vain ; the true ring is undemonstrable (*after a pause, in which he awaits the Sultan's answer*),—almost as undemonstrable as for us at present the true faith.

*Saladin.* How ? Is that to be the answer to my question ?

*Nathan.* It is only to excuse me if I cannot trust myself to distinguish the rings which the father made with the design that they should not be distinguished.

*Saladin.* The rings ! I should think that the religions I have named to you are very distinguishable, even in respect to dress,—even in the matter of meat and drink.

*Nathan.* Only not in respect of their grounds. For do they not all ground themselves on history, written or oral ? And history must be received on trust, must it not ? Well, then, whose truth are we least disposed to call in question ? Surely, the truth of those whose blood we share, who from our child-

hood have given us proofs of their love,—who have never deceived us except for our good.

*Saladin (aside).* By the Living! the man is right. I am silenced.

*Nathan.* Let us return to our rings. As I said, the sons prosecuted. Each swore to the judge that he had received the ring directly from the hand of his father. . . . Each assevered that his father could not have been false. Rather than suspect that of such a dear father, he must accuse his brothers of treachery, although he was disposed to believe all that is best of them; and he would find means to convict the traitors and to be revenged on them.

*Saladin.* Well—and the judge? I am anxious to hear what you will make the judge say. Speak!

*Nathan.* The judge said, “If you do not quickly summon your father, I shall dismiss you from my tribunal. Do you think I am here to solve riddles? Or do you wait for the true ring to open its mouth? But, hold! I hear that the true ring possesses the magic power to make one beloved of God and man. That must decide. . . . My advice to you is that you take the matter exactly as it lies. If each of you has received his ring from his father, let each believe his ring to be the true one. It is possible that the father meant to suffer no longer the tyranny of the one ring in his house. Certain it is that he loved all three of you, and loved you equally, since he would not oppress two in order to favor one. Well, then, let each of you, for his own part, be zealous of an unbribed, free, unprejudiced love. Let each compete with the others in demonstrating the virtue of the stone in his own ring, and illustrate that virtue with gentleness, with hearty concord, with beneficence, with fervent devotion to his will. And then, if the virtues of these stones shall manifest themselves in your children’s children’s children, I will summon you again a thousand times thousand years hence before this tribunal. Then a wiser than I will sit on this judgment-seat and pronounce sentence. Go!” So spake the modest judge. . . . *Saladin*, if you feel yourself to be this promised wiser man —



*Saladin (rushing towards him and seizing his hand, which he holds to the end of the scene). I, who am dust! I, who am nothing! Nathan, dear Nathan, the thousand times thousand years of your judge have not yet expired. His tribunal is not mine. Go! go! but be my friend.*

Lessing did not live to see the crowning work of his genius brought upon the stage. It was not until two years after his death that the first representation was hazarded in Berlin, and then with small success on account of the incompetence of the actors. Twenty years later it was brought forward under better auspices by Goethe and Schiller in Weimar, and by Iffland in Berlin. Since then, though apparently ill adapted as I have said for scenic representation, it has been performed on nearly every stage in Germany. Says Stahr:—

“In our days, the almost incredible event has happened that Lessing’s ‘Nathan,’ in a Greek translation, with the title of ‘The Wise Old Jew,’ has been brought by Greek actors on the stage at Constantinople.<sup>1</sup> At the first representation but few Turks were present, mostly police officers. When the piece was repeated on the following day, the Turkish public preponderated. Their attention and interest were extraordinary. Many times they seemed disposed to receive Nathan’s frankness before the throne of Saladin with less magnanimity than did the Sultan himself. But the story of the three rings was received with unexampled enthusiasm; and at its close there broke forth a round of applause in which the most reserved ‘lights of the harem joined with eager satisfaction.’”

“Nathan the Wise” was the last work of Lessing which can be considered as belonging to the department of general literature. His “Education of the Human

<sup>1</sup> The translator was Kaliourchos, a Greek, who had studied in Germany.



Race," which succeeded it,—a treatise whose influence on the progress of enlightened thought it is impossible to overestimate, — closes his literary labors. It was his last testament to his nation, and contains, in a few pages, the substance of his philosophy of religion. The closing words have a special significance, as indicating the future contemplated by the writer, whose end was at hand : —

“Why should I not come again as often as I am fitted to acquire new knowledge and new faculties? Do I carry away so much that it would not be worth the while to come again? Or because I forget that I have been here before? 'T is well that I do forget; the memory of former lives would impede the best use of the present. And what I *must* forget now, is it forgotten forever? Or because I shall have lost too much time? Lost? What have I to neglect? Is not all eternity mine?”

## CHAPTER XI.

## MENDELSSOHN.

CLOSELY connected with the name of Lessing, in the literary annals of his day, was that of his friend and co-worker Mendelssohn,—a name more familiar to us in its musical than in its literary sense.

Moses Mendelssohn, grandfather of Felix the great composer, was born in Dessau in 1729. Lessing's junior by only eight months; a philosopher in the truest, the original, etymological sense of the word, a veritable lover of wisdom,—in any country but Germany he would be counted great in that line. But because he gave only the results of his speculations, and gave them in a clear, intelligible, popular form without technical gibberish; and also, it must be confessed, because he did not discuss the deeper, insoluble problems of the mind,—he does not rank with metaphysicians of the first class, the great, transcendental lords whom we all glorify, whom a few read, whom some understand, or think they do, which answers the same purpose. He gives us the finished product without the machinery which Goethe satirizes through the mouth of Mephistophiles:—

“ Then the philosopher steps in  
And shows that it could not have otherwise been;  
The first was so, the second so, —  
Therefore the third and fourth are so.  
Were not the first and second, then  
The third and fourth could never have been.”

Mendelssohn, in short, was a metaphysician without the jargon of the schools. He obtained from the Berlin Academy the first prize (Kant being his competitor) for his essay on the Nature of Evidence in Metaphysical Science. Kant's essay, Hettner thinks, was by far the deeper of the two, but the judges could not understand it, — which is very likely. The Academy were so pleased with Mendelssohn's essay that they wanted to make him a member ; but Frederick the Great, to whose approval the candidates for that honor must be submitted, would have no Jew in his Academy. We may be sure that Frederick was actuated by no religious scruples in this matter ; he had quite other reasons of his own for his hostility to the Jews.

Mendelssohn was a Jew, — a German by country, but not a German by nation. German proper, as spoken by Christian Germans, was not his native tongue. He might have picked up something of it through the ear, but to read it and to write it he had to learn it as a foreign language, — and to learn it by stealth. For so obstinate was the bigotry of the stricter Jews of his day, so inveterate their hatred of their Christian persecutors, that as late as 1746 the synagogue at Berlin expelled a Jew boy from the city for being detected in carrying a German book through the streets on one of his errands.

Mendelssohn's father, Mendel, was a scribe of the synagogue, whose business it was to make copies of the *Thora*, or Law, and to teach Jewish children their religion. The boy was precocious, and developed extraordinary mental capacity, which so stimulated the father's ambition that not content with the progress his child was already making he urged him on, to the permanent detriment of his physical well-being. His growth was

stunted, and a spinal disease, caused by the overworking of his brain, deformed him for life.

Nothing in the history of literary men is more interesting and more instructive than the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties, — the struggle with poverty and social disadvantage, from which great scholars have issued victorious and won for themselves enduring fame. At the age of fourteen this Jew-boy, a puny, diminutive hunchback, impelled by thirst for knowledge, found his way to Berlin, where his teacher, Fränkel, having been called to the office of chief Rabbi of the synagogue in that city, had preceded him. For several years his only means of support was a small pittance which he received as a copyist in the service of Fränkel. A small room in a garret he occupied free of cost; he subsisted for the most part on dry bread, and has left it on record that he marked with lines on his loaf the portion to be consumed each day, so as not to trench on the day following. All this time he continued his studies, and had the courage — it required a good deal — to break through the restraints imposed by the Jewish authorities, and to make himself acquainted with Christian literature. Unassisted, with great difficulty, he learned Latin. A controlling love of philosophy led him to study a Latin translation of Locke's "Essay on the Understanding," laboriously looking out the words in a dictionary until he had mastered a sentence, and then pausing to consider its import. He then went to work upon Cicero, and acquired some knowledge of the ancient schools of philosophy, — the Academy, the Stoics, and Epicureans. And now he was so fortunate as to make the acquaintance of a fellow Jew, Aaron Gumperz, with whose assistance he mastered French and English, and enlarged his



intercourse with modern philosophy. Material advantage, as well as moral, resulted from this acquaintance. It introduced him to the knowledge of a rich silk manufacturer, Bernhard, who received him into his family as private tutor to his children, and afterward made him his book-keeper and foreign correspondent. Mendelssohn finally became a partner in the business. There was an end of all pecuniary trouble.

In 1754 there befell him a stroke of good fortune, scarcely less important than the patronage of Bernhard. He made the acquaintance of Lessing. They were both of the same age; they met, and soon formed an attachment which lasted for life. The acquaintance had its origin in Lessing's passion for the game of chess. Readers of "*Nathan the Wise*" — whose hero, by the way, was suggested by Mendelssohn — will remember the prominence given to chess in that drama. Lessing, then resident in Berlin, was wont to seek relief from his literary labors in that most intellectual of all games; and Gumperz, the friend of both, recommended Mendelssohn as a match for him. From adversaries in sport, they became friends in earnest. The benefit which the Jew, athirst for knowledge, derived from intercourse with the thoroughly educated scholar, the most cultured man of his time, was immense. He was put upon the right track; to passionate endeavor was added method and direction. Lessing, on his part, discerned in Mendelssohn all the promise of his future career, and wrote to Michaelis, at Göttingen, concerning him, —

"He is actually a Jew; a man of some twenty odd years, who, without any instruction, has made great attainments in languages, in mathematics, in philosophy, and poetry. I foresee that he may become the glory of his people, if his co-

religionists, whom, unhappily, a persecuting spirit has always impelled to make war on such characters, will suffer him to ripen. His honesty and his philosophical turn of mind foreshadow a second Spinoza without the errors of the first."

In the same year, through Lessing's mediation, Mendelssohn was introduced to Nicolai, who writes: "I soon became better acquainted with this (in the highest sense of the word) noble and excellent man; in a few months we were intimate friends." Nicolai diverted his attention somewhat from metaphysical studies, and directed it to polite literature. "I am becoming something of a *bel esprit*," he wrote to Lessing, then absent from Berlin. "Who knows but I may soon write verses? Madame Metaphysic must pardon me; she maintains that friendship must be founded in similarity of tastes. I find, on the other hand, that similarity of tastes may result from friendship." In 1755 Lessing gave Mendelssohn Shaftesbury's "Characteristics" to read, and asked him what he thought of it. "It is well enough," said Mendelssohn; "but that is a kind of thing I can do also." "Can you, indeed?" replied Lessing; "why don't you do it?" Some time after Mendelssohn brought him a manuscript, which he begged him to read. "When I have leisure," said Lessing, "I will look it over." In several subsequent visits he waited for Lessing to give him his judgment upon it; but Lessing discoursed of other things, and Mendelssohn was too modest to broach the subject. At last, however, he plucked up courage, and inquired after the manuscript. "Oh, your manuscript! Yes, really, you must excuse me; I will attend to it shortly. Meanwhile, take this little volume, examine it at your leisure, and tell me how you like it." Mendelssohn opened the volume, which bore the title,

"Philosophical Conversations," and found, to his surprise, that it was his own work, which Lessing had got published without his knowledge. "Take it," said Lessing, "put it into your pocket, and this Mammon along with it," — handing him the money for the copyright; "it may be of use to you." Thus Mendelssohn — un-awares and prematurely, as to his own intent — came before the public as an author. But now, the ice once broken, the author's career once initiated, there followed in rapid succession several publications of greater or less value, — and in 1767 his great work, "*Phaëdon; or Concerning the Immortality of the Soul*," prefaced by an essay on the life and character of Socrates. In 1768 there followed a second edition, and in 1769 a third. The work was translated into most of the languages of Europe. His biographer<sup>1</sup> says: —

"The subject, the manner of treatment, and especially the elegance of the style excited universal attention. The learned world, up to that time, had known but three Jews who had written in any other language than the Hebrew, — Maimonides, Spinoza, and Orobio, a Jewish physician (1687). That a Jew, then living, could write philosophical works in German, and that in a style which in perspicuity and elegance excelled everything that Germany had yet produced, was an entirely new phenomenon. Thenceforth the circle of Mendelssohn's admirers was greatly extended. The scholars of the capital sought him out; and no traveller, who made any pretensions to culture, visited Berlin without endeavoring to become acquainted with him."

The work was to have been dedicated to his friend Abbt, whose conversations had suggested it. But Abbt died June, 1767, while the sheets were going through

<sup>1</sup> Dr. G. B. Mendelssohn.



the press, and the Preface contains a touching tribute to the departed, in which the author has reared a fit monument to his memory. Mendelssohn planned his work on the basis of the "Phaedon" of Plato, and took Plato for his model in his treatment of the subject. He calls it a cross between a translation and an original essay. In addition to Plato, he avails himself of the thoughts of the more important among the philosophers who have handled the same question in subsequent time, especially Plotinus, Descartes, Leibnitz, and Wolff. He says: —

"My object is not to exhibit the grounds which the Greek sage may have had in his day for belief in immortality, but those which in our age, after the efforts of so many great minds devoted to the subject, would satisfy a man like Socrates, who must have a reason for the faith that is in him. I run the risk of making my Socrates a disciple of Leibnitz; but no matter, I must have a heathen in order not to be obliged to enter on the question of revelation."

In accordance with this design, the narrative portion of Plato's "Phaedon" — the character of Socrates, as it there appears, constituting the immortal charm of the book — is faithfully preserved, while the reasonings which Plato puts into his mouth (so unsatisfactory, most of them, to modern thought) are replaced by arguments based on modern views, and appreciable by the modern understanding. In the Greek "Phaedon" Socrates, having given his proofs, or his reasons for believing in the immortality of the soul, launches forth into wild speculations concerning the future abode and destination of the soul, which add nothing to the value of the work, and serve only to betray the ignorance of the ancients concerning the physical structure of the globe.



All this Mendelssohn omits, and substitutes instead a confession on the part of Socrates of his inability to throw any light on the question of the future whereabouts:—

“Whether the souls of the godless are to endure cold or heat, hunger or thirst; whether they will wallow in the Acherusian bog; whether they will pass the time of their purgation in the gloom of Tartarus or the flames of Pyriphlegethon; whether the blessed will inhale the pure air of heaven and bask in the splendor of dawn in a world glittering with gold and jewels, or feed on nectar and ambrosia bosomed in eternal youth, — of all that, my friend, I know nothing. If our poets and allegorists know, let them give assurance thereof to others. . . . As for me, I content myself with the conviction that I shall enjoy forever the Divine protection; that in the life to come, as in this, a holy and just Providence will rule over me, and that my true happiness will consist in the beauty and perfection of my mind, — temperance, justice, liberty, love, knowledge of God, co-operation with his purposes, and devotion to his will. These blessings await me in the future to which I hasten; more I need not to know in order to enter with courageous trust the way which shall lead me thither.”

By the publication of the “*Phaedon*” Mendelssohn became suddenly famous, and remained for a time the most conspicuous luminary in the literary firmament of his country. This will not seem strange, if we consider that native popular literature in Germany was then in its infancy. Lessing had not yet published his more important works. Klopstock, after the publication of the first three cantos of the “*Messiah*,” had gone silent for a time. The splendid constellation of the Weimar epoch had not yet risen. Kant’s great work had not yet stirred to its depths and fundamentally regenerated the German mind. Mendelssohn was the hero of the hour,

the cynosure of the waiting minds of his time. If not profound, as judged by a later standard, he was yet sufficiently so to satisfy the thinkers, — Kant himself acknowledging his merit in that kind ; at the same time, he was sufficiently vernacular and intelligible to please the less laborious, average reader, and to give him the comfortable feeling that he too could read philosophy and understand it.

Next in importance to the “Phaedon” — a companion-piece to that, discussing the proofs of Deity, as the “Phaedon” discusses those of immortality — is the *Morgenstunden*, — “Morning Hours,” so-called, because it embodies the substance of lessons in theology given in the morning, before taking his place in the counting-room, to his own children and other lads associated with them. The subject for him was not merely an occasion of intellectual gymnastic, — a gratification sought in the exercise of his reasoning powers, — but an affair of the heart, the deepest interest of his life. He says : —

“Without the conviction of this truth life has for me no relish, prosperity no joy. Without God, Providence, and Immortality, . . . life below seems to me — to use a well-known and oft misused figure — like a journey in wind and storm, without the comforting prospect of finding shelter and rest in some lodging when the day shall end.”

His success in proving the existence of God is neither greater nor less than that of most others who have attempted the same task before and since. That is not a truth to be established by demonstration, for the simple reason that it lies nearer and deeper than all the facts and considerations that may be adduced in its support. The author builds mainly on the so-called “ontological

argument," by which the existence of God is deduced from the idea we have of an all-perfect Being. Existence, it is claimed, is an essential element in that idea. We cannot conceive of an all-perfect infinite Being except as necessarily existing; but we do conceive of such a Being, therefore he must exist. Kant has exposed the fallacy of this reasoning, by which it is attempted, as he says, to shell a fact out of a thought. Whatever force there is in it amounts to this,—that, since the effect cannot be greater than the cause, it is reasonable to suppose that our idea of an all-perfect Being must come from such a Being. In other words, the idea is best explained as an infinite Being's revelation of himself in the finite mind.

The publication of the "*Morgenstunden*" was posterior by ten years to that of the "*Phaedon*." Kant's "*Kritik*" had appeared meanwhile, but the revolution it was destined to work in philosophy was scarcely anticipated. Mendelssohn knew it only by report; and, indeed, was too much enfeebled by disease at that time to grapple with its terrible "all-to-nothing-crushing" logic.

Meanwhile Mendelssohn had been delivered from the pressure of poverty and want which weighed so heavily on his early years. He had become a partner in the firm in which he had served as clerk; he had married; he had a home; his income, if not very ample, was yet sufficient to maintain him in comfort, and to enable him to entertain the numerous friends and visitors who sought his society. Nothing was wanting to his full enjoyment of life but bodily health. This blessing through life was denied him. His infirmities increased with his years. The weakness of his digestive organs necessitated a severe asceticism in the matter of food.



No enkratite of old could be more abstemious ; it seemed impossible that a man in active life should subsist on so spare a diet. Rising through the year at the hour of five, his morning hours until ten were given to literary labor. In the evening came friends, the social entertainment ending with a supper, at which the viands and wines set before his guests were untasted by himself. Instead of these, a glass of sweetened water was the limit of his indulgence.

Among Mendelssohn's other visitors, Lavater also, passing through Berlin, paid his respects to the author of "*Phaëdon*." Charmed, as were all who knew him, with the pure and noble spirit which breathed in his conversation as well as his works, Lavater could not forgive so good a man — so believing, so religious — for being a Jew. Why should not a man who had all the moral qualities which go to make a Christian be a Christian by confession ? His own Christianity, as Goethe testifies, was apt to be aggressive, with more of zeal than of tact. With the best intentions, but regardless of what might be supposed to be Mendelssohn's feelings in such a matter, he dedicated to him his translation of Bonnet's "*Inquiry into the Evidences of Christianity*," with an open letter requesting him to examine the book ; if he found the argument faulty to refute it, exposing its errors ; but if, on the other hand, he found it satisfactory, to do what policy, as well as love of truth and honesty required, — what Socrates would have done in such a case, — meaning that he should forswear Judaism and be baptized. Mendelssohn's son and biographer is charitable enough to say that Lavater may have been actuated by real kindness in this appeal, affording the Jew a convenient occasion for improving his civil status



by becoming a Christian citizen. Whatever the intent, the effect on Mendelssohn was very disastrous. It placed him in the awkward dilemma, either to exasperate his co-religionists by repudiating the faith of his fathers, or to scandalize orthodox Christians by seeming to despise the claims of the Gospel. The challenge found him physically disabled, weak, and suffering beyond his ordinary state. But he rallied himself to reply in such a manner as to justify his loyalty to Judaism, without disrespect to the Christian faith. He had some misgivings in view of the censorship of the press, without whose approval no book or pamphlet in those days could get itself published. He must seem, of course, to prefer Judaism to Christianity, and thus inferentially to impugn the established faith. He wrote to the Consistory, sending some sheets of his "Reply," and offering to submit the whole to their judgment. He received an answer which attests the high esteem in which he was held by Christian authorities:—

"Herr Moses Mendelssohn may print his writings without submitting them singly or collectively to the Consistory for their judgment upon them, inasmuch as his known wisdom and modesty are a pledge that he will write nothing which can give public offence."

The affair attracted the general attention of the reading world. Mendelssohn was allowed on all hands to have acquitted himself with masterly skill in the delicate position in which he was thus thoughtlessly placed, while Lavater was universally blamed,—and indeed, on reflection, blamed himself for the indiscreet zeal with which he had invaded the sanctity of the inner life.

Scarcely less vexatious than the original invasion were

the numerous letters with which Mendelssohn, after he had published his "Reply," was pestered by pertinaacious disputants, who craved explanations, and persisted in controverting this point and that in his statement of the grounds of his retention of his own against the solicitation of the Christian faith. The meek, retiring scholar, with whom it was a principle never to engage in religious discussions with disciples of other creeds, found himself dragged before the public, and entangled with endless controversies on the one subject on which of all others he desired to keep his thoughts to himself. These annoyances, combined with bodily ails of long standing, induced an attack of nervous prostration which long interrupted and threatened to terminate forever his literary career. Intellectual effort of every kind was strictly forbidden as endangering his mental sanity, if not his life. For six or seven years he desisted from writing. To shut out thought, he would sometimes employ himself in counting the tiles on the roofs of the opposite houses. He avoided his study on the upper floor; but happening to enter it one day, after a long interval, he found, to his dismay, that his practical housewife had utilized table and shelves for purposes undreamed of in his philosophy. Jars and gallipots mocked him from every available space; jellies and jams offered other nutriment than he was used to seek in those sacred places. He shuddered; "So it will look here," he thought, "after I am dead. Am I then already a ghost revisiting my old haunts?" Sadder sensations he had seldom known than those which possessed him as he descended the stairs to the family parlor.

As a Jew and a philanthropist, Mendelssohn was interested in the moral elevation of his people, whose

mind and character had suffered deep debasement from the civil degradation to which Christian oppression had doomed them. To this end he wrote in Hebrew for the education of Hebrew youth. And the first work which he published after his recovery from years of illness was a German translation of the "Pentateuch." It was printed in Hebrew letters for the sake of conciliating Jewish bigotry, which condemned the use of German books. One object at which he aimed in this publication was to convert his kinsmen in the faith to the use of pure German in the place of the barbarous compound of the two languages then in use, — a jargon which Mendelssohn thought as demoralizing as it was disgusting: it served to enhance and perpetuate the antagonism between the Jewish and the Christian citizen. The project encountered fierce opposition on the part of the bigoted Rabbis, who more than reciprocated the aversion of the Christian, and who feared the weakening of their authority from closer approximation between the two. What the Hebrew wanted of the German was his money, not his diction. Mendelssohn's version was condemned, and the ban of excommunication decreed against all who should use it. But the wise man's labor was not lost, though he lived not to rejoice in its fruits. Another generation adopted his counsel; his translation was studied, and continues to be studied, by the Jewish youth of Germany. Their language improved, and their manners in the same proportion. From the German of the Bible they advanced to familiar converse with German literature; they took on intellectual and social polish; and to Mendelssohn's word and work, more than to any other cause, it is due that the German Jew has become respectable in the eyes of his fellow-citizens.



In 1783 he published his translation of the "Psalms;" and in the same year appeared his "Jerusalem; or, Concerning Religious Domination and Judaism,"—one of his most important productions, of which Kant writes:—

"Herr F. will tell you with what admiration for its insight, its fineness, and its wisdom, I have read your 'Jerusalem.' I regard the book as the harbinger of a great though slowly approaching and advancing reformation, which will affect not only your nation but others. You have known how to give your religion a degree of freedom of conscience which it has not been supposed capable of, and which no other can boast."

In 1785 appeared the "Morgenstunden," of which I have already spoken, and which, his biographer thinks, surpasses in clearness and elegance of style all his previous writings. Soon after its publication, F. H. Jacobi came out with his treatise on the doctrine of Spinoza, in the form of letters addressed to Moses Mendelssohn. In this work he maintains that Lessing, who had died some four years previous, was a follower of Spinoza, and that his views of religion must be interpreted in conformity with that doctrine. By Mendelssohn, the uncompromising theist, this allegation was received as a slander on his departed friend, which he resented with all the indignation that friendship could inspire. The accusation had been made before, and Jacobi and Mendelssohn had already engaged in a controversy on the subject; but this renewal of the charge aroused in the latter a mental agitation too great for his slender and enfeebled body. In fact, it was the death of him. He wrote rapidly, under great excitement, his vindication of the departed, in the form of "Letters to the Friends of Lessing;" and on his way to the publisher with the manuscript of this his



last work he contracted a cold, from the effects of which he died on the 4th of January, 1786. The "Letters" appeared as a posthumous publication:

Heine, with characteristic cynicism, says of this work :

"The zeal and the defence were as laughable as they were superfluous. Rest quiet in your grave, old Moses! Your Lessing, to be sure, was on the way to that dreadful error, that pitiable calamity, — Spinozism. But the All-highest, the Father in heaven, rescued him at the right moment by death. Be quiet; your Lessing was not a Spinozist, as slander would have it. He died a good deist, like you and Nicolai and Teller, and the Universal German Library."

Mendelssohn's genius was predominantly critical. His literary sense was exceptionally fine; and his artistic perceptions, as developed in the essay on the "Sublime and Naïve," so acute, that I am inclined to believe that Lessing, the greatest of critics, may have derived some suggestions from his Jewish friend in return for the many he imparted to him. Such a writer cannot be adequately represented by extracts. His merit consists rather in the perfection of the whole than in the brilliancy of parts, — rather in the orderly evolution of a theme than in striking quotable sayings.

The following specimen is taken from his minor philosophical writings, and was suggested by Rousseau's then recent defence of the so-called "State of Nature," — an essay which obtained the prize from the Academy at Dijon, in France : —

"When one considers what a multitude of learned societies flourish in Europe in our day, and how they are all at work for the extension and diffusion of the arts and sciences, one can hardly doubt that this century is the most enlightened from the foundation of the world. Almost every corner of France

and Germany is rescued from oblivion by little learned guilds, which yearly enrich our libraries with a respectable volume of their proceedings, and attach considerable pecuniary gains to the discovery of certain truths. People may say what they will, the old love of truth was quite too breadless. What success could so needy a gentlewoman as Truth then was expect to find in a covetous world? In our day they hang at least a few gold-pieces round her neck, in order to lure lovers from all quarters who shall court her favor for the sake of her coins.

“In France there is a sufficient number of such little guilds; and for several years past that of Dijon has attracted to itself the attention of scholars. In the year 1750 it offered its customary prize for an answer to the question whether the arts and sciences have been conducive to moral improvement? . . . Now, suppose it had been made out that morals have not improved, but rather deteriorated, we Germans would think that we ought to concern ourselves with making our truths more practical, with bringing knowing and doing into closer relation. But how much better a certain citizen of Geneva has interpreted the meaning of said learned society! Rousseau — that is the name of this learned Genevan — has found out that the real purpose of the Academy was to know whether it is better to be an intelligent man or a fool; that is, whether mankind act rationally in striving after wisdom. He has written his essay accordingly; and, lo! he has secured the prize.

“In answering this droll question our Genevan has done wonders. In passionate language he has demonstrated, to the comfort of all fools, that human beings engage in nothing so base as when they labor to be wise; and that every one who detects this propensity in himself should beat his head until he has beaten the dangerous illusion out of it. Assuredly, the self-willed Caliph Omar, who commanded his people to heat the public baths with the famous library of Alexandria, — that universal treasury of arts and knowledges, — was, in comparison with our more self-willed Genevan writer, a promoter of science. Omar despised only the wisdom of all other peoples, and regarded the Koran and its expositors as the only books

which, by their wisdom, goodness, and piety, can make men rational and blest. But seriously to maintain that human kind would be happier if they had never reflected, or if they could now prevail upon themselves to annihilate the results of their reflections and investigations, — that beats the Arab!

“Rousseau had at heart more important objects, which he was not willing at once to bring forward. It needed another question proposed by the same Academy to fully loose his tongue. That question was, What is the origin of inequality among men, and is it founded in natural laws? . . . This was water to Rousseau’s mill. He understood the question to mean, whether mankind would not have acted more in conformity with their nature if they had continued to roam the forest, and had remained as like, each to each, as one monkey is like another. Our readers will easily guess how a Rousseau, regarding as he does art and science as the most direct sources of corruption, would answer this question. In fact, he has not shunned to heap upon the whole human race the most unheard-of reproaches. He maintains that all civilized nations have become corrupt through their love of society; that the orang-outangs and the pongos—two species of apes—are worthier creatures than all members of society, and that the prevailing desire to perfect themselves will pursue them from one misfortune to another with no possible help for their misery.

“We will not dwell upon the method by which he endeavors to support his singular opinion. Whoever is curious may learn it from the lately-published translation of his treatise. On the other hand, it is time to place before our readers the following communication sent us by our Swiss correspondent. . . .

“GENTLEMEN, — You desire to know how the essay of Herr Rousseau, concerning the inequality among men, has been received in our Republic.

“No sooner had the essay been given to the public than we heard in all the coffee-houses, in all assemblies, and even not sel-



dom in the council chamber, hot disputes, *pro* and *con*, concerning social life. Some even went further than Rousseau himself. Penetrated with tender compassion for our misery, they are far from thinking that we are past help. They held, on the contrary, that it is still possible to restore the desired original state of man, and to change this valley of tears to a blessed paradise. It could be done by abolishing the cursed *meum* and *tuum*, dissolving social connections, and driving men back into the wilderness which, to their hurt, they have forsaken. "Look around you," they were often heard to say, "beloved fellow-citizens; see what evil and misery those hateful names — Society, Property, Inequality of Rank — have wrought among the inhabitants of the earth. Highwaymen, parasites, sycophants, thieves, misers, insatiable usurers, are the consequences of property. Incest, adultery, jealousy, lovers' despair we owe to the institution of marriage and the notions of beauty to which society has given rise. War, slander, slavery, contempt would cease if we could disband society and restore equality among men. We will put an end to this nonsensical business. I beseech you, for the sake of humanity, for your own happiness' sake, repent! Let your hair and your nails grow again; they are the native ornaments of the natural man. Abandon these proud edifices, these almost indestructible monuments of the folly of your ancestors and of your old cherished prejudices. Gather sticks and fagots from the nearest thicket, set fire to them, cast into it your childish household goods, your health-destroying apparel; let the smoke ascend to the clouds, and incite all the wretched inhabitants of earth to imitate you. Then around this glorious bonfire we will frolic awhile like the savages in the forests of Dahomey; and when it has burned down we will bid each other a tender farewell, and never see each other again. Each shall rove naked and alone and free through the wide expanse of Nature. When he is tired, he shall lie down by the side of some brook and sleep undisturbed. How happy, how contented and peaceful are the apes, the orang-outangs, and the pongos! Ought not the enviable contentment in which they live to arouse your jealousy? We too, beloved brethren, — we too might satisfy our hunger with acorns, quench our thirst with water, and beneath some aged oak enjoy the sweets of repose. And what do we fools want more than food and drink, idling and sleep?" " " "



## CHAPTER XII.

## THE UNIVERSAL GERMAN LIBRARY. — FRIEDRICH NICOLAI.

AN important function in modern literature, unknown to elder time, is that of critical journalism. In Germany, during the latter third of the eighteenth century, this function was exercised with praiseworthy zeal, with marked ability, and, on the whole, to good purpose, by the "*Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*" (Universal German Library), the earliest critical journal of wide and commanding influence in Germany; not the first in chronological order, but the first which had the ear of the general public. Started by Friedrich Nicolai in 1765, and during the greater part of its history edited by him, devoted mainly to reviews and discussions of current German literature, and continued to the year 1805, the "*Bibliothek*" was during those years a power in literary Germany whose importance is incalculable. To say that it was to Germany what the "*Encyclopædie*," founded by Diderot and d'Alembert, was to France — a comparison sometimes made — is only so far true as both were champions of intellectual freedom, but is otherwise unjust to the moral influence of the German periodical.

In literature the "*Bibliothek*" encouraged Germanism, — native forms and native talent, — as against the French classicism of Gottsched, who for many years had ruled the taste and given the law to his countrymen. It favored English rather than French models, but without

espousing the cause of the Swiss party, — Bodmer and Breitinger, — in their contest with Gottsched. Nicolai had already, in a previous publication, called these would-be Swiss dictators to order, comparing them to the magistrates of a small city, who, because their word is law within their own borders, flatter themselves that they are looked up to with admiration by the rest of the world. Of Bodmer's weak epics he had said, that, inasmuch as an epic poem is the supreme product of the human mind, a poet who will insist on writing epic after epic must either be a miracle of Nature, or a very enthusiastic believer in his own capacity for such achievement.

The "Bibliothek" would allow of no dictatorship such as Germany had submitted to in time past; it tolerated no exclusive authority, but recognized excellence in various kinds, and in its earlier, better days endeavored to do justice to real worth without regard to prejudice or precedent. In this way it became a liberator of the German mind, and supplied a stimulus to native talent before unknown. As an instance of the fairness with which it was conducted, it is mentioned that when Goethe's works were to be reviewed, the editor, whom Goethe had held up to ridicule, committed the task to other hands, fearing for himself some bias of personal resentment.

In philosophy and religion, the "Bibliothek" represented and constituted itself the foremost champion of what in the history of German literature is known as the *Aufklärung*. This, as a marked and memorable epoch of that history, demands some notice.

The word *Die Aufklärung* may be rendered, as nearly as we can hit it in English, "Enlightenment." It means emancipation from the bondage of old superstitions, deliverance from the night of unreason, the triumph of

the understanding over mystifications, ecclesiastical and other; in a word, free thought as opposed to dogma. In this sense the *Aufklärung* was not peculiar to Germany. The eighteenth century, and especially the latter half of the eighteenth century, witnessed the same recoil from old tradition in England and France as well. In the former country, Toland, Collins, Tyndal, Woolston, Chubb, Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, Hume, and later, with more aggressive spirit, Thomas Paine, appeared as antagonists of ecclesiastical authority and the prevalent creed. The philosophy of the seventeenth century, along with its other results and mental revolutions, had borne this fruit. The old mediæval philosophy took upon itself to be the interpreter of religion, and wrought in the service of the Church. Descartes, the pioneer of the new, would owe nothing to authority; he would begin at the beginning, and, to make sure that no prejudice or habit of thought derived from the old remained to vitiate his system, would allow nothing which he had not first proved. "I will doubt all," he declared; that is, "I challenge all." The doubt which with him was merely formal and experimental, a *terminus a quo*, became in another generation a *terminus in quem*. The influence of Locke undesignedly took the same direction. The principles propounded by that cautious sage reached further than he knew, and engendered a progeny he little expected. Toland quoted his authority in a work which was publicly burned by the hangman, and would have brought upon its author the vengeance of the law had he not been forewarned and escaped. Locke had vindicated the reasonableness of Christianity, and Toland assumed to occupy the same ground when he published his work with the title "Christianity not Mysterious."

But the magistrates of Dublin seemed to have thought that if Christianity were not mysterious, the bottom was out of everything. Anthony Collins, a disciple and personal friend of Locke, wrote, sometime after the master's death, a Discourse on Freethinking, which roused a hornet's nest of critics, who allowed indeed that thought should be free, but insisted that it must be the right kind of thought. It must be allowed that these writings, although claiming the support of Locke's principles, were not conceived in his spirit, and were not in accord with his intent. But it must also be allowed that the principles were logically susceptible of the application given them by these writers. Admit the autonomy of reason, and you cannot invoke authority to dictate the conclusions at which reason shall arrive. Hume, the arch sceptic, the final outcome of Locke's philosophy, discerned the irreconcilable conflict between the claims of authority and reason. "I am the better pleased," he says, at the close of his essay on the impossibility of proving miracles, "with the method of reasoning here delivered, as I think it may serve to confound those dangerous friends, or disguised enemies, of the Christian religion who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason. Our most holy religion is founded on faith, not on reason; and it is a sure method of exposing it, to put it to such a trial as it is by no means fitted to endure."

In France the revolt against ecclesiastical authority, conducted by such men as Voltaire, Condorcet, Diderot, and others, contributors to the "*Encyclopædie*," assumed more formidable proportions. More radical in its negations, more fierce in its assaults, more diffused in its influence, it was one of the primary agencies in



effecting the overthrow of the ancient order, — the great Revolution, with its terrors and its woes.

In Germany the *Aufklärung* was a milder type of the same protest. It was not destructive, but reformatory; not infidelity in any true sense, but rationalism. Weak in principle, shallow of insight, and barren of ideas, it sought to square everything by the rule and measure of the sensuous understanding; enthroned the *gesunder Menschenverstand* — sound common-sense — as supreme arbiter, flouted all mysteries, discredited the deeper experiences, ignored the graver questions of the soul, and bounded its views by the narrow horizon of everyday life. Its one merit — and that was a high one in those days — was its brave defence of intellectual freedom, its steady and consistent advocacy of the right of private judgment against bigotry and pedantry in Church and school. In this respect it rendered good service to literature, and deserves the thanks of the nation, though the nation has outgrown its need.

Of this *Aufklärung* the “Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek” was the organ, and Nicolai the chief and indefatigable champion.

Christoph Friedrich Nicolai was born in Berlin on the 18th of March, 1733, the son of a bookseller. He was sent as a boy to the Orphanotrophium in Halle, — a school founded near the close of the previous century by Hermann Franke, the celebrated philanthropist, one of the greatest benefactors of his time. In this institution — where orphans without means received gratuitous instruction — other children were also taught at moderate charges. The strictness of the religious discipline here practised — a discipline not equally suited to

all natures — created in young Nicolai a repulsion to which, in an autobiographical notice, he ascribes the aversion to “show-religion” which characterized his riper years. He was afterward placed at the Realschule in Berlin, and then, in his seventeenth year, sent to Frankfort-on-the-Oder to receive his initiation in the bookseller’s trade, to which he was destined by his father. Here he devoted his leisure hours to the study of languages and philosophy, under the influence of Baumgarten, Professor of Philosophy in that city, who has the credit of founding the science of æsthetics, to which he gave the name. Nicolai made himself acquainted with the system of Wolff, the reigning philosophy of that time; also, with the Greek and Latin classics, and to some extent with the English poets, — then already beginning to supplant the French in the favor of his countrymen. His first publication, put forth anonymously, was a vindication of Milton against the absurd attack of Gottsched, who charged the poet with having stolen the “Paradise Lost” from Latin authors, — on the ground, perhaps, of Lauder’s “*Auctorum Miltoni facem prælucentium*,” in which the “*Adamus Exsul*” of Grotius is mentioned as having furnished Milton with a portion of his argument. Gottsched, who had all his life maintained the supremacy of French literature, — who had modelled his own writings, and endeavored to model those of his countrymen, after the French pattern, — beheld with indignation the dawn of a preference for the English, and hoped by his sovereign word to extinguish the dangerous rival.

Meanwhile, Nicolai’s father had died, his elder brother had succeeded to the book-selling business, and Friedrich returned to Berlin to act as his assistant. But the

life of an author was more attractive, and the greater part of his time and talent thenceforth, and even after the death of his brother had devolved upon him the main burden of the firm, was devoted to literary labor. In 1755 he produced a work which excited general interest by its bold criticism of the prominent authors of the day, entitled "*Briefe über den itzigen Zustand der schönen Wissenschaften in Deutschland.*" In 1757 he edited a magazine with the title, "*Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften und der freien Künste.*" This soon passed into other hands, and was succeeded in 1759 by another, which Nicolai conducted with the aid of Lessing and of Mendelssohn, — the "*Litteraturbriefe,*" a critical journal, which discussed literary subjects with freedom and vigor, and (as might be expected from Lessing's co-operation) from a height of critical intuition before unknown. Says Hettner : —

"His mighty word [that is, Lessing's] struck like a purifying thunderbolt into the sultry, stifling azote of the pretentious mediocrity which surrounded him. Out of every line speaks the loftier mood of the Seven Years' War. Felix Weisse compares the amazement produced by the '*Litteraturbriefe*' to the terror which heralded the appearance of the Prussian soldiers on the battlefield. At the same time its criticism was in the highest sense creative; the banner of Shakspeare, which until then had been but a dim and distant vision, now unfurled itself in its purity and power, and became thenceforth the object of aspiration to the newly-quickenened desire for nature and nationality."

It was only, however, while Lessing was associated with it that the new journal maintained its high position, and exercised its full power. When he removed to Breslau, and from there contributed only occasional

brief essays, it lost the chief element of its success. It took a different turn ; high literary criticism gave place to essays aiming at theological and moral enlightenment ; until, finally, in 1765, its editor and his co-workers dropped it, and issued in its place the new periodical already mentioned, which made this aim its specialty, — the “Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek.”

Nicolai's literary activity did not confine itself to the labor bestowed on these periodicals. A man of indefatigable industry, he wrote various works of considerable note in their day, most of which were inspired by the same zeal for enlightenment, contending against superstition, intolerance, and what he regarded as the errors and evils of the time. The most important of these is the work entitled “The Life and Opinions of Master Sebaldu Nothanker,” — a satire directed against the ecclesiastical bigotry and persecution which, in spite of the thunders of the “Bibliothek,” still pursued its baleful course. Sebaldu Nothanker, the hero, is an honest, pious village clergyman, who on account of his liberal sentiments incurs the ill-will of his fanatical bishop (superintendent), is deposed from office, deprived of his livelihood, and driven to various shifts for a maintenance, until, by a fortunate accident, he obtains a competence for his declining years. This narrative forms the ground-work of many severe attacks on the prevalent wrongs and abuses of society. The prime object is to unmask the hypocrisy of certain Orthodox divines, who attempted to impose on the public their own private interest as the interest of religion and “even of Almighty God.” But other typical characters, easily recognized in the *personnel* of the story, come in for a share of the author's satire. The work



was a happy hit, and had an immense success. Four large editions were soon exhausted. It gave rise to a whole literature of attacks and vindications, translations into various languages, and plentiful imitations. The Empress Catharine was so delighted with it that she sent the author a gold medal, and in an autograph letter requested him to forward to her immediately all future productions of his pen. Lessing and Wieland gave it high praise; and even Fichte, while fiercely censuring Nicolai on other grounds, acknowledged the merits of this production.

The following extract will give some notion of the humor of the book. Among the characters it satirizes is that of an epicure, — a certain Count Nimmer, — to whom, as an influential nobleman, the ejected clergyman applies for intercession with the ecclesiastical authorities. The Count, suffering with a fit of indigestion from yesterday's surfeit, is reclining on a lounge and sipping his morning chocolate. Sebaldus approaches with many bows, and stammers something, which the Count understands to be an inquiry after his health: —

“Not very well, my dear Herr Pastor; my troublesome morning cough torments me more and more every day. I can't eat. Yesterday I ventured to partake of a woodcock pasty, and to-day my stomach is still oppressed with it. I am too feeble. Even melons no longer agree with me, and pine-apples cause flatulence. For to-day, I have merely ordered a *ragout fin*. I must fast to-day, in order to restore the tone of my stomach. But, dear Herr Pastor, is n't it a sad thing not to be able to eat?”

The poor minister, who has fasted from necessity, and sees starvation before him, replies: —

“Yes, your Grace, — almost as bad as to have nothing to eat. I am almost afraid I shall be in that predicament.”

The Count, who is ignorant as yet of the object of his visit, supposes him to refer to the difficulty of obtaining foreign delicacies on account of the war, — the Seven Years’ War, then raging in Germany, — and, without waiting for further explanation, interrupts him, —

“You are right, dear Herr Pastor, there will soon be nothing more to eat; this wretched war spoils everything. I spent last winter most miserably; the oysters arrived very irregularly. The whole winter long I did n’t so much as see a black grouse from Prussia; no wild ducks either from that quarter. You know, Herr Pastor, I am a German patriot; I can’t endure French dishes. Their *consommés à la Cardinale*, their *côtelettes d’agneau frites* won’t do for me. Dear Herr Pastor, we must remember that we are Germans; we may, to be sure, put up with good French sauces, but otherwise our diet must be German. And I know the best things to be had in all German provinces. Now, there are few people in this part of the country who understand what a Pommeranian *muräne* is, or a *flinder* from the isle of Hela, or a *brasse* from Berlin. These things I used to get formerly every post-day. But now, Herr Pastor, it is all done with. Last March I ordered a *pâté* from Hanau, and a spiced *Schwartenmagen* from Frankfort-on-the-Main; and the Prussian hussars captured them at Fulda on the way. Who the devil would have thought that the fellows would leave their winter quarters in March? In October I sent for field-fare from the Harz Mountains, and the Lückner men gobbled them up. In February I should have had pheasants from Bohemia but for the troops stationed at Wilsdruf. And the French are no better. Last month, at Bielefeld, they stole my Westphalian hams and the champagne in which they were to be boiled: it is clear that they care more for Westphalian hams than they do for the peace of Westphalia. The *caviare* sent me from Königsberg the Russians intercepted at Kösslin,

and shipped it at Kolberg: I should like to know what business their fleet had with my *caviare*. I ordered crabs from Sonnenburg (Herr Pastor, those are the best crabs for size and flavor), but they will go into the maws of the Swedes."

All this while the poor pastor had not been able to get in a word. But the footman at this point announced breakfast, and the Count—premiering that he always left the choice of the breakfast to the cook, that his appetite might gain by surprise—insisted that Sebaldus should share the meal with him.

"Let us see what we have got to-day. Aha! a capon with truffles; not so bad! Let me help you."

At last the preacher found opportunity to represent the distress of his family, and to beg the Count to intercede for him with the president of the Consistory. The Count replies:—

"Ah! so you want my intercession? I am sorry I cannot serve you. I have ceased going to town; the table there is so bad,—and especially at the president's. I will never in all my life visit him again. A half year ago he gave me onion soup and smoked Nüremberg sausages! I don't understand how a human being can subsist on such food."

Of Nicolai's other writings, the most noticeable are his "Travels in Germany and Switzerland," "Anecdotes of Frederic the Great," "Life and Opinions of Sempronius Gundibert, a German Philosopher," "The History of a Fat Man, in which are three Marriages, three Mittens, and a good deal of Love," and a curious and learned treatise "On the Use of False Hair and Wigs in Ancient and Modern Time."

When Goethe's "Sorrows of Werther" appeared and took the civilized world by storm, Nicolai, to show his

disapproval of the work, — its sentimentality, and especially its tragic ending, suicide from hopeless love, — published a foolish parody, entitled “The Joys of Young Werther,” in which, the hero’s pistol being loaded with chicken’s blood, he survives the suicidal attempt, marries Charlotte, and is happy ever after.

His “Sempronius Gundibert” was an attack on Kant, whose philosophy was then a recent dispensation, flush with its early renown. It was not a wise undertaking, and suggests the well-meant but mistaken zeal of the dog who barked at the first railway train that passed his master’s premises. In fact, it did not arrest the triumphant career of that philosophy. Nevertheless, it must be confessed that the author of “Gundibert” detects weak points in the Königsberger’s argument, especially in the “*Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* ;” and, regarding the matter from the utilitarian, Gradgrind point of view, he has a good deal to say against the expediency of a plain man’s troubling himself with Kantian metaphysics. Nicolai himself was something of a Gradgrind, — a man for whom the loftiest and the deepest in poetry, philosophy, and religion had no charm ; with whom hard facts and every-day experience weighed more than all the sublimities and profundities and abstractions of the schools. Very un-German in this respect, more akin to the English mind. He had even a touch of English humor, — or at any rate affected it, — as will be seen in the following extract from his Introduction to the “History of a Fat Man” : —

“We are accustomed to judge the unknown by the known. This is even a rule with the learned. And therefore I wager that the learned reader, when he sees the title of this book, will immediately review in his memory all the fat men of ancient



and modern time, in order to compare them with our fat man. But I will also wager that the learned reader will experience what very often happens to learned people. They reason from their indwelling learning and wisdom concerning men and human affairs so strictly, so critically, so wisely, so cogently, so incontrovertibly, that every one must be satisfied of the correctness of their propositions, unless it should happen that no one understands them, — of which they are apt to complain. Nevertheless, it not unfrequently occurs that not one of their inferences and conclusions is found to hit the fact when they come out of their studies, their gymnasiums, lyceums, universities, academies of the sciences and fine arts, or whatever may be the name of the learned forcing-houses in which, by means of much learned manure and not a little learned smoke, all human knowledge and understanding are brought to maturity much earlier than with poor ignorant mortals who do not fertilize their immortal mind either by much reading or speculation, and whose miserable fortune it is merely to work and to act.

“So far as the learned friends of the author remember, there are — without reckoning three fat kings, and fat prelates without number — only seven very celebrated short and fat men. If now the learned reader supposes that our fat man resembles one of these, or any other fat man that may occur to him, it is ten to one again that the learned reader is mistaken. . . . Especially we entreat you, kind reader, not to connect in your thought our fat man with any king who may have been short and fat. We are not going to speak of kings at all.

. . . . .

“Not a word more then of Charles, the fat king of Germany and France, who wanted his wife, after ten years of married life, to prove her continued virginity by contact with red-hot iron; nor of Louis, the fat king of half France, who, in order to make sure of heaven, died on a cross strewn with ashes; nor of the short and fat king of England, who married three Kates, two Anns, and a Hannah; nor of all the other short and fat kings of the world. . . . The remarkable seven fat men, with

whom one might be inclined to compare our hero, are Ther-sites, in ancient time; of later date, Sancho Panza, Falstaff, Gil Perez, uncle of the celebrated Gil Blas; the fat man of Otaheite, who was so exalted that with due gravity he caused his wives every day to stuff the food into his mouth; and two fat, short persons in Tristram Shandy, Dr. Slop, the man-midwife, and the little bandy-legged drummer, who was keeping guard at the gate of Strasburg when a stranger from the Promontory of Noses rode into town with the biggest nose ever seen, — of which the world and posterity would have had no idea had not the celebrated Slawkenbergius taken care to give an exact description of it."

Every one has heard of Nicolai's spectral visitations. In 1791 great mental trouble had seriously impaired his bodily health and produced a disease of the brain, which caused him to see ghosts, — first singly, then in numbers, coming and going, occupying his room, and haunting him for months. It seemed to be the nemesis and irony of fate that the man who all his life had been fighting against popular illusions, superstitions, and exceptional wonders of every kind, should be doomed to experience in his own person the most remarkable case of spectral illusion, or pseudopsy, on record. But Nicolai in this affliction was true to himself and his doctrine: he stood his ground against the ghosts; he recognized them at once as figments of the brain, the effect of disease, and subjected them to calm philosophic observation. He recovered his health, and continued to write and to publish twenty years longer, until his death in 1811, at the age of seventy-eight.

It is sad when an author outlives himself, and fails to perceive that he has lost his grasp of the public mind, — when no longer guiding the current of his time

he yet persists to put in, on every occasion, his superfluous and unheeded word. "I wonder that you will still be talking, Signor Benedick; nobody marks you." For half a century Nicolai had been the oracle of the reading multitude of his nation, and had ruled, not indeed the philosophic and scientific, but the popular mind of his time. Had he only known when his reign was over and his mission done! could he only have understood that he who has the bride is the bridegroom! could he only have opened his eyes to perceive the rising of a new sun, and hailed it with the hearty confession, — "He must increase, but I must decrease"! In Germany, as nowhere else, faction and fashion sway the republic of letters. I had learned in my youth to think of Nicolai as a shallow twaddler, and nothing more. Such was the impression I got from the spokesmen of the dynasty which supplanted his rule. It is only recently that I have learned, by personal acquaintance with his writings, to do him justice, to find real merit in the writer and the man. He fought a good fight in his day against bigotry and persecution and false pretension of every kind, and deserves high honor as one of the liberators of the German mind. Hettner says: —

"It is time to finally cease from speaking of Nicolai only in terms of contempt and scorn. An age which shall do justice once more to the great merits of the *Aufklärung* period, cannot fail to do justice also to the great merits of Nicolai. To be sure, it is Nicolai's own fault that the follies of his old age caused the fame of his youth and manhood to be forgotten. Like Gottsched, he had the misfortune to live too long in a fast living age; like Gottsched, he could not bring himself to confess that his way of thinking, and his influence, had been already overtaken by a younger and more advanced generation.



His writings and letters sufficiently testify that there lay in his nature an invincible propensity to self-conceit and vanity. This propensity had been fed and increased by the early fame which had been conceded to him by the best men of his time, and by the important and commanding position which he held for long decades at the head of the most significant and influential journals. Gradually it had become a fixed idea with him that his knowing and thinking were the model and rule for all knowing and thinking; or, as Fichte, in his polemic, says, 'that he had thought of everything that was right and useful in any department, and that all which he had not thought, or would not think, was useless and false. I, Friedrich Nicolai, think differently; by that you can see that you are wrong.' . . . When Lessing, with his religious and philosophic feeling, outgrew the narrowness of the empty and vague ideas of the *Aufklärung*, Nicolai saw in the new departures of his friend only love of contradiction, aimless taste for singularity, or even miserable contentiousness. When, with Goethe and Schiller, a new poetry sprang up in which there was once more deep and original passion, in which the fulness and entireness of human nature, sensibility, and imagination resumed their rights, — when Kant, and afterward Fichte and Schelling, created a new philosophy which was real philosophy once more, and not a mere threshing of the straw of English deism, — Nicolai, in the pride of his perverted self-consciousness, considered himself called to be the guardian and protector of good taste and sound common-sense, and wrote in satirical novels, in contributions to the 'Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek,' in 'Letters of a Traveller,' and would-be scientific works, those foolish fanfaronades which had the melancholy effect that our greatest poets and thinkers have handed him down as the archetype of all empty heads and wrong heads, and thereby disfigured the true natural features of his better past. All around, there was blossoming and flourishing the new time which has become the classic age of our German poetry and science. But Nicolai, with silly recusance and peevish irritation, fought against everything that lay outside of his horizon, and deprived of the counsel and aid of his



old friends Lessing and Mendelssohn, lost himself at last in the flattest loquacity, in the dreariest and most repulsive book-making and book-selling fussiness, and even where he was in the right, — as in his restless unearthing of the secret hiding-places and creeping ways of the Jesuits, in his ever-watchful pursuit of enthusiasts, ghost-seers, and miracle-mongers, — brought upon himself, by his senseless exaggeration and his flat diffusiveness, the curse of ridiculousness. . . . It is the most important, but also the most difficult, problem in the art of life for a writer, as he grows old, to discern when the time has come for him to hold his tongue.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

WIELAND.

I HAVE spoken of the movement known in the German literary world as the *Aufklärung*, — a movement initiated by Nicolai and represented by the Universal German Library. The influence of this movement was less apparent in the poetry than it was in the prose writings, and especially those of the second-class essayists of the day. Lessing, although associated with Nicolai in his earlier efforts, was on the whole unaffected by it; and Klopstock, as the head of what Gervinus calls the “Seraphic School,” still controlled the more serious portion of his countrymen in the interest of a sentimental, rhapsodical, and somewhat narrow-eyed piety. In the latter part of the century there came a strong reaction against this tendency, initiated by Christoph Martin Wieland, born in Oberholtzheim, in Swabia, 1733.

Wieland did not at once emancipate himself from Klopstock’s sway. He followed for a while the leading of that spirit, and figures in the earlier stage of his career as a religious enthusiast. His youthful productions, his “Anti-Ovid,” his “Trial of Abraham,” his Psalms, his “Letters from the Dead to Surviving Friends,” are inspired with a moral and spiritual fervor which, if not profound, is very sincere, and which strangely contrasts with the worldly tone of his subsequent writings. Scarcely any two authors differ more

from each other than Wieland differs from himself in the earlier and later epochs of his literary history. In youth a Christian moralist, in his riper years an ethnic and an epicurean; in both characters and in every period of his life an indefatigable workman. At the age of seventeen he published a didactic poem in six books, entitled "The Nature of Things," and from that time forward never ceased writing, until in 1813 death, at the age of four-score, arrested his pen. It would occupy more space than I can spare even to name by their respective titles the multitudinous productions — novels, poems, satires, philosophical and historical essays — which make up the forty-nine volumes of Gruber's edition of his works. Besides this mass of original writings, he translated Shakspeare (the first German translation), Horace's Epistles and Satires, Cicero's Epistles, and the works of Lucian, and was editor successively of several journals and magazines, of which the best known is "*Der deutsche Merkur*." Whatever may be thought of the quality of his work in these performances, one cannot but admire the immense fecundity of the man.

Wieland, like Klopstock, was fortunate in the enjoyment of an assured pecuniary support and ample leisure for literary pursuits. The son of a Lutheran clergyman, he manifested as a boy a remarkable precociousness of intellect; reading Latin with ease at the age of seven, and planning an epic poem at the age of twelve. In his fifteenth year he was put to school in a gymnasium near Magdeburg, and in his seventeenth entered the University of Tübingen nominally as a student of law, but devoting himself to literature. After leaving the university he spent some time in Switzerland with Bodmer, who had been attracted by his writings, and to whose influence

we owe some of the most marked of the spiritual poems already named, especially "The Trial of Abraham" and "Letters from the Dead." At this period, with a religious zeal bordering on fanaticism, he characterizes poets of a secular and Anacreontic turn as "vermin creeping at the foot of Parnassus," and calls upon the court-preacher Sack, in Berlin, to denounce from the pulpit the offence of their frivolous lays. In 1759 he returned to Biberach, the home of his childhood, and there received the appointment of *Kanzleidirector*, which he held for ten years. He was then called by the Elector of Mainz to the professorial chair of philosophy and belles-lettres in the University of Erfurt, and in 1722 was invited by the dowager duchess Anna Amalia of Weimar to take charge of the education of the two princes, her sons Karl August (afterward Grand Duke of Weimar, the friend of Goethe) and Constantine. This office he accepted; and when with the adult age of his pupils its function expired, he continued to reside at Weimar, receiving in the name of other offices, which were sinecures, or nearly so, an annual stipend from the Government during the remainder of his life.

While residing at Biberach the direction of his mind, and with it of his writings, had undergone a complete revolution. The religious zealot, the moral purist, had become, not in practice but in theory, almost a libertine. Leading a pure and blameless life, his poetry took on a sensual, not to say licentious, tone, which gave great offence to his former friends. The disciples of the Klopstock school in Göttingen burned his books, and Lavater called upon all good Christians to pray for the renegade sinner. Certainly it is much to be regretted that Wieland, in the strong reaction against the senti-



mentalism and pietism of the "Seraphic School" and the crude opinions of his own youth, — a reaction induced by intercourse, under the patronage of Count Stadion at Biberach, with a higher class of society, and by the study of Italian and French literature, — that he should have suffered himself to be betrayed into such compositions as "Das Urtheil des Paris," "Der neue Amadis," "Die Grazien," and others of like import. It could hardly fail that the author's morals should be called in question by readers who knew nothing of him but his writings. But at Weimar, where personal acquaintance forbade such suspicions, he was greatly respected and beloved. The duchess mother, a wise and noble woman, remained through life the poet's fast friend; and Wieland was the first to experience that patronage of genius which afterward Karl August extended to Herder, Goethe, Schiller, and others, and which gave to his little capital its well-deserved title, "the Athens of Germany."

Not all that Wieland wrote in this stage of his literary life is chargeable with those offences which disgrace the works I have named. The "Musarion," a poem of much beauty, whatever its moral defects, is not immoral in its purpose. It aims to show how easily stern moralists, disciples of Zeno and Pythagoras, may be tempted to transgress; and how, on the contrary, a woman who is no prude, who allows herself great freedom of manner, may nevertheless resist temptation and maintain her virtue.

His "Agathon," a prose romance, appears to have been the author's favorite work. It is thought to embody his own experience (indeed the author hints as much in his Preface), and suggests the practical conclu-

sions to be drawn from that experience. He took the historic Agathon, the disciple of Socrates, for his nominal hero, but invested him with the character of the Ion of Euripides, and in the person of this youth of Greek costume and surroundings he portrays his intellectual and moral self. The work therefore may be considered as the "*Apologia vitae suae*." But to the general reader it is more interesting as a story than as literary self-portraiture. Gervinus says:—

"The work is, as to its form, an Alexandrian romance, with love affairs, separations, and reunions, pirates, slave-sales, trials of virtue and defeats, soliloquies, a tossing about from one adventure to another, from the crown to the beggar's gown, from rapture to despair, from Tartarus to Elysium. . . . The Greek coloring is not well hit; the scenes and persons are from the age of Socrates, while the tone is from the letters of Aristænetus and Alciphron. The bombast and tinsel of the latest time are brought into strange connection with the Athenian sage. All this is characteristic of the author's levelling propensity, as it is that his Plato imperceptibly becomes Socrates, that his Socrates and even his Diogenes change to Aristippus, to Horace, to Lucian, and all at last merge in Wieland. More important than the form is the moral import of this romance. It is intended to show how far a poor mortal, with only natural powers, may advance in wisdom and virtue, how much we are influenced by our relations, and how we become wise and good only by experience, by errors, by constant working on ourselves, by frequent changes of mind, and especially by good society and good examples. For this purpose the author brings his platonic Agathon, with his youthful enthusiasm and his philosophy,—which makes human happiness to consist in a contemplative life, and assigns a contemplative life to the groves of Delphos,—into antagonism with the sophist Hippias, whom he makes the representative of that new philosophy which Wieland had learned from the English and the French. All turns on the

question whether enthusiasm or self-seeking, spiritual love or sensual, ideas of the divinity or the animality of man, wisdom or prudence, are most consonant with the truth. The evil principle represented by Hippias is theoretically assailed, but practically it conquers. Agathon's belief in revelation and his strict principles are wrecked on this practical secular philosopher; his innocence is wrecked on Danae; but he still retains in secret an inextinguishable attachment to the favorite ideas of his youth."

Wieland outgrew this second phase of his intellectual life as he had outgrown the first. Reflection, public opinion, and the censure of approved critics convinced him of his mistake in exalting sensual themes. His "Conversations with a Pastor," an essay published in 1775, is partly a confession and partly a sophistical extenuation of his offences in that direction. To say that he repented would be saying too much; that term would imply that he had sinned against his conscience in sending forth into the world those objectionable compositions. But such was not the case. It was not a moral but an æsthetic offence which he seemed to himself to have committed in so doing. It was not a sin of the heart but of the head of which he had been guilty. His heart was not in those writings any more than it had been in the pious rhapsodies which preceded them. In both cases he had supposed that that was the true way to write, and had written accordingly; in both cases he found that he was mistaken, and abandoned that way accordingly. He was no more a sensualist than he was a pietist; the real nature of the man was no more expressed in the one style than it was in the other. The truth is, — and this is the main defect of the writer and the man, — there was no real nature to be expressed, no



deep reality, no original bias, no interior necessity determining him one way rather than another. He had no root in himself. A man who was altogether swayed and determined from without, he took his cue from occasion, from the latest impression, from the tone of the society in which he moved. Such a nature of course is incompatible with true genius; and genius, in the stricter and more limited sense of the term, he had not, but extraordinary gifts, exceptional talent, — such talent as sometimes culminates into the altitude of genius, and is capable of the same effects.

This talent is conspicuous in his “Oberon,” his greatest poem, and the work on which the author’s fame must ultimately rest. “Oberon” is an epic in twelve cantos, of which the hero and a portion of the fable are taken from an old French romance, entitled “Huon of Bordeaux.” Sir Huon is the hero, but the Oberon who gives his name to the poem is not the Oberon of the French story, but the Oberon of Shakspeare’s “Midsummer-Night’s Dream” and Chaucer’s “Merchant’s Tale.” The interests of the two — the knight and the fairy king — are finely interwoven, and furnish the two main motives which govern the plot and determine the course of the story. Sir Huon journeying to Bagdad by order of Charlemagne, whence he is to fetch the beard of the caliph together with his daughter, as the condition of his restoration to his country and the recovery of his paternal estates, encounters Oberon, who assists him in that enterprise with his magic gifts, with the horn which sets every one a dancing who is guilty of any secret fault, and the cup which yields of itself a never failing draught. On the other hand, the knight, by his marriage with Rezia the caliph’s daughter, and their unconquerable



fidelity, proof against the hardest trials, is the means of reconciling Oberon with Titania, whom the fairy-king had sworn to banish from his presence until a tried and faithful couple should prove the existence on earth of unchangeable constancy.

In the way of artistic construction, in adaptation of part to part, in harmonious wholeness, this masterpiece of Wieland has never been surpassed. In form it is a perfect epopee, and the subject-matter, though not absolutely free from the vice of the author's second period, is in that respect mostly unobjectionable. The portraiture is spirited, the interest well sustained, and the rhythmical movement — the versification with varying numbers and varying rhyme according to the exigencies of the language — has that marvellous flowing ease which makes metre and rhyme seem spontaneous and accidental, and which justifies the contemporary designation of Wieland as "the poet of the Graces." The *élan* of the first verse reminds one of the Greek and Latin epics, —

"Noch einmal sattlet mir den Hippogryphen, ihr Musen!"

A more graceful, and I may add a more charming, poem of equal length I have not found. William Taylor thinks that no poem since Tasso's "Gerusalemme" is so well fitted to be a "European classic." The Schlegels hailed it as the revival of the Romantic interest, and Goethe wrote to Lavater concerning it these memorable words: "So long as poetry remains poetry, gold gold, and crystal crystal, Oberon will be loved and admired as a masterpiece of poetic art."

Wieland has been called the German Voltaire. The comparison is unjust, and altogether misapprehends, as it seems to me, the characteristics of the two writers.

The only resemblance between them lies in the versatility of their talent and in their want of original insight and strong convictions. Wieland has nothing of Voltaire's bitterness, and very little of his irreverence or persiflage; and though, for a German, defective in depth and earnestness, he is, compared with Voltaire, both earnest and profound. He is French in the perspicuity of his style, but not French in the method of his mind. The writer to whom I would soonest compare him, as a writer of prose, is his favorite Lucian. As a poet, he seems to me to resemble Ovid among the ancients, and Ariosto among the moderns.

Wieland is not to be ranked with the foremost poets of his nation. No one would think of placing him by the side of Goethe or Schiller; but among poets of the second class he holds a distinguished position, and no one has more truly conceived or more elaborately described the qualifications of the poet: —

“Senses so sharply tuned that the slightest breath of Nature causes the entire organ of the soul to vibrate like an æolian harp, and every sensation to give back with heightened beauty and the purest accord the melody of things; a memory in which nothing is lost, but everything imperceptibly coalesces into that fine, plastic, half spiritual substance from which fancy breathes forth its own new and magical creations; an imagination which by an inward, involuntary impulse, idealizes each individual object, clothes abstractions in definite forms, . . . which bodies forth all that is spiritual, and spiritualizes and ennobles all that is material; a warm, tender soul, which kindles at every breath, all nerve, sensation, and sympathy, — which can imagine nothing dead, nothing unfeeling in Nature, but is ever ready to impart its own excess of life, of feeling and passion to all about it, to metamorphose ever with the greatest ease and rapidity itself into others and others into itself; a passionate love for the wonder-

ful, the beautiful, and the sublime in the material and the moral world; a heart which beats high at every noble deed, and shrinks with horror from everything base, cowardly, unfeeling. Add to all this a cheerful temperament, quick circulations, — add also an inborn propensity to reflect, to search within, to rove in an ideal world, and, together with a social disposition and delicate sympathy, an ever predominant love for solitude, for the silence of the forest, for all that disengages the soul from the burdens by which it is hampered in its own free flight, or that rescues it from the distractions which interrupt its pursuits.”

The judgments pronounced on the merits of Wieland and the tendency of his writings by some of the more prominent historians of German literature have not been favorable, although it is conceded that he exercised an important influence on the literary action of his time. The criticism of Gervinus on “Agathon” I have already quoted. Vilmar, who is even more patriotic and anti-gallican, declares Wieland to have been “the representative in Germany of the age of Louis XV.,” of that kind of culture which, “indifferent to everything higher, concerned itself only with the cheerful enjoyment of life, the culture of sensualism, of frivolity. To show,” he adds, “that there *are* no ideals, that there *is* nothing great, worthy, or noble, is the everywhere plainly discernible and often even expressly affirmed aim of Wieland’s poetry. It is the practical materialism imported to us from Voltaire, La Mettrie, Diderot, and the so-called Encyclopædists; the popular philosophy of the man of pleasure, with whom all wisdom consists in the most prudent and complete exploitation of sensual enjoyment, and all morality in the doctrine ‘live and let live,’ in the most refined egoism.” He continues: —



“When this Frenchified world and its loose, frivolous tone declined with the beginning of the present century, and in the course of its second decennium vanished altogether, then the relish for Wieland’s poems also declined, and in the third decennium (1820–1830) not only entirely disappeared, but gave place to a not unjustifiable repugnance; so that they are now forgotten, are no more read, and with few exceptions deserve not to be read. . . . If the poet is he who unlocks the deeps of the human heart, who knows how to represent and to elicit the deepest sorrow and the highest joy, who shows in the changing images of this transitory life the deep seriousness of the permanent and eternal, who truly feels and teaches us to feel truly, then we must altogether deny to Wieland the predicate of poet in the proper and higher sense.”

This criticism strikes me as unduly hard and one-sided. If it does not exaggerate the vice of a considerable portion of Wieland’s writings, it errs in imputing to all his works what is true only of a part; and it overlooks his real merits, the grace of his style (especially as a prosaist), the fascinating play of his fancy, and his genial humor. Because he is not an idealist, because he is not characteristically and peculiarly German, it would make him out to be nothing. In spite of all such strictures, “Oberon,” if not so much read, or with the same enthusiasm as it was on its first appearance (and what poem of a past century is?), will always be regarded by impartial critics as a poem of rare beauty; and Wieland’s prose will always remain a model in its kind. Still, it must be confessed, as I have said elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> that “his excellence lies rather in the manner than the matter. He is more graceful than energetic, more agreeable than impressive, more sportive than profound. ‘Words that

<sup>1</sup> Prose Writers of Germany, p. 128.



burn' are not found on his page, nor thoughts that make one close the book and ponder and rise up intellectually new-born from the reading. But then he has charms of manner that lure the reader on and hold him fast. And when I speak of him as not profound, I speak in reference to German standards. Unlike the generality of his countrymen, he occupied himself rather with the shows of things than their substance, with phenomena rather than with laws. He loved to discourse pleasantly rather than to investigate conscientiously, or to settle precisely. As Goethe says, he cared less for a firm footing than a clever debate."

I give in Sotheby's translation an extract from the "Oberon." The version, though not the best that can be imagined, is spirited and tolerably faithful, and is said to have been highly commended by Wieland himself.

The passage I quote is from the second canto, where Sir Huon, on his mission to Bagdad, accompanied by his faithful squire Scherasmin, finds himself as day declines in a wood, which Scherasmin knows to be the residence of Oberon the fairy king. The squire, overwhelmed by superstitious fear, attempts in vain to fly, and to persuade the knight to fly. Overtaken with a tempest, they are suddenly brought up by a procession of monks and nuns, who have been celebrating Saint Agatha's day. Oberon appears and winds his magic horn, which compels the whole company, with the exception of Sir Huon, who alone is wholly guiltless, and therefore not subject to the spell, to whirl in dance: —

“ Now on they journey till the daylight dies,  
And slowly sinks to evening's glimmer gray.  
Before their course a gloomy forest lay.

. . . . .

‘Tempt not that dangerous path, Sir Knight! ’Tis said  
That none who enter there return again.  
You smile, and deem, I see, my caution vain.  
Yet trust me, Sir, beneath that haunted shade  
A tiny, wicked goblin holds his court.  
There foxes, harts, and deer alone resort,  
Who once were men like us, in form the same.  
Heaven knows in what wild skin our human frame  
Shall be ere dawn arrayed, to make the demon sport.’

Meanwhile the wandering travellers onward go  
Unwares within the circuit of a wood,  
Whose mazy windings, at each step renewed,  
In many a serpent-fold twined to and fro,  
So that our pair to lose themselves were fain.  
The moon full-orbed now gained the ethereal plain,  
And as her beams through wavy branches played,  
The twinkling fairy dance of light and shade  
Confused their wildered eyes, that sought the path in vain.

‘Sir,’ Scherasmin exclaimed, ‘amid the maze  
Of this deep labyrinth, perplexing art,  
To puzzle wanderers, well has played her part.  
The only chance to ’scape these crooked ways  
Is for good luck to follow — one’s own nose.’  
This counsel (wiser than the learn’d suppose)  
Ere long conducts them to that middle space  
Where all the walks that wind from place to place  
At once with circling rays a central star enclose.

And while they gazed around in mute despair,  
’Mid the wild woods a distant castle gleams;  
As woven from the evening’s rosy beams  
It lifts itself and glitters in the air.  
In Huon’s mind delight and terror stole,  
In doubt if truth or fancy charm his soul.  
Breathless he moves, as drawn by magic hand,  
And sees the castle’s golden gates expand,  
And forth a silver car drawn on by leopards roll.

A boy more beauteous than the God of love,  
In smiling Cytherea’s soft embrace,

Sat in the silver car with heavenly grace,  
And held the silken reins and onward drove.  
‘Fly,’ Scherasmin exclaims, ‘he comes! we’re dead!’  
And seized Sir Huon’s steed and swiftly fled.  
‘You’re lost, forever lost, if you delay!’  
‘How fair he is!’ cries Huon. ‘Fair? Away!  
A thousand times more fair, a thousand times more dread.’

A tempest winged with lightning, hail, and rain  
O’ertakes our pair; around them midnight throws  
Darkness that hides the world; it peals, cracks, blows,  
As if the uprooted globe would split in twain;  
The elements in wild confusion flung,  
Each wars with each as fierce from chaos sprung.  
Yet heard from time to time amid the storm  
The gentle whisper of the aerial form  
Breathed forth a lovely tone that died the gales among.

‘Why dost thou fly? Thy happiness thou fliest!  
Come back, come Huon! dare in me confide!  
Hear me! to happiness thy path I guide!’

Onward through thick and thin they dash again,  
Beat by the blast and flooded by the rain,  
When, lo! a cloister wall impedes their rash career.

A new adventure! On that day befalls  
The yearly feast in honor of the name  
Of holy Agatha, most gracious dame,  
The guardian of these girl-confining walls.  
And there, not distant far, a cloister stood  
Of youths, Saint Antony’s high-pampered brood.  
That eve the cloister-race their choirs had joined,  
And both a common pilgrimage designed,  
As nun and monk befits, in social neighborhood.

Back they returned, and near the cloister moat,  
On as they wind in order pair by pair,  
The rattling tempest thunders from the air;  
Cross, standards, scapularies, wildly float,  
Sport of the blasts; and through each folded veil  
In torrents stream the wind and driving hail.

All ranks and orders in confusion lost  
Mingle in comic mood diversely tossed,  
And scamper here and there as wind and rain assail.

Here, as they pant together, monks and nuns,  
Through the thronged convent gate that open stood,  
'Mid the confusion of the cloister brood  
Now Scherasmin with headlong fury runs:  
That holy ground a haven he vainly deems,  
And safe 'mid guardian saints himself esteems.  
Soon Huon comes, and while with courtly grace  
The knight permission begs, and checks his pace,  
Swift, as a meteor darts, the dwarf amid them gleams.

At once the storm is fled. Serenely mild  
Heaven smiles around, bright rays the sky adorn,  
While, beauteous, as an angel newly-born  
Beams in the roseate dayspring, glowed the child.  
A lily stalk his graceful limbs sustained,  
Round his smooth neck an ivory horn was chained.  
Yet lovely as he looked, on all around  
Strange horror stole, for stern the fairy frowned.  
And o'er each saddened charm a sullen anger reigned.

He to his rosy lip the horn applies,  
And breathes enchanting notes of wondrous sound.  
At once then Scherasmin in giddy round  
Reels without stop. Away the old man flies,  
Seizes a hoary nun without a tooth,  
Who dies to dance as if the blood of youth  
Boiled in her veins. The old man deftly springs.

Cloister and convent burn with equal rage,  
Nor hoary hairs nor rank the dance withstand.  
Each sinner takes a sister by the hand,  
And in the gay contention all engage.  
Not soon such ballets shall be seen again;  
No rules or discipline the choir restrain.

Then at his<sup>1</sup> word relenting Oberon waves  
His lily wand. The charm dissolves in air;

<sup>1</sup> Huon's intercession.



Saint Antony's fat wards like statues stare;  
And pale, as newly risen from their graves,  
Haste the dishevelled dames with decent grace  
Their veils and robes in order to replace.  
But to such capers Scherasmin unused  
Feels with the ball his whirling brain confused,  
And thinks his heart will burst, and sinks upon the ground."

The following is from "The Abderites": —

#### THE LAW-SUIT CONCERNING THE ASS'S SHADOW.

This affair, like most of the great events of history, had its origin in a very trifling occasion. A certain dentist, by the name of Struthion, by birth and ancestry a Megarensian, had settled in Abdera; and being, as is likely, the only one of his profession in the country, his practice extended through a considerable portion of southern Thrace. His usual way to obtain customers was to visit the fairs in all the great and little towns for more than thirty miles around, where, besides his tooth-powders and tooth-washes, he occasionally for a considerable profit sold patent-medicines for hypochondria, hysterics, diseases of the chest, and troublesome humors. He kept for these journeys a stout ass, which on such occasions was laden with his own short and thick-set person, and with saddle-bags full of medicines and provisions. Now, it so fell out that just as he was about to visit the fair at Gerania his ass had foaled, and consequently was not in a condition to make the journey. Struthion therefore hired another ass for his first day's journey, the owner of which accompanied him on foot, in order to take care of the beast and ride it back to town. The road lay across an extensive heath. It was in the height of summer, and the day was excessively hot. The dentist, who began to find it intolerable, looked piningly about for some shady spot where he might dismount and obtain a breath of fresh air. But far and wide there was neither tree nor shrub, nor any object visible that might afford a shade. Finally, not knowing what else to do, he halted, dismounted, and sat down in the shadow of the ass.

"Eh, Mister, what are you doing there?" said the owner of the ass. "What do you mean by that?"

"I am sitting in the shadow awhile," replied Struthion, "for the sun beats upon my skull beyond all endurance."

"No, no, my good sir, that is not in the bargain. I have let you the ass, but nothing was said about the shadow."

"You are jesting, my friend; the shadow goes with the ass, as a matter of course!"

"Hi! by Jason, that is not a matter of course!" said the ass-keeper, with a look of defiance. "The ass is one thing; the ass's shadow is another. You have hired the ass of me for so much; if you wanted to hire the shadow besides, you should have said so. Without a word more, get up and continue your journey, or else pay me a reasonable sum for the ass's shadow!"

"What!" cried the dentist. "I have paid for the ass, and now am I to pay for the shadow, too? Call me three times an ass, myself, if I do that. The ass is for this day mine, and I will sit in his shadow as often as I please, and I will continue to sit in it as long as I please. That you may depend upon."

"Is that your serious intention?" asked the other, with all the phlegm of an Abderite ass-driver.

"I am perfectly serious," replied Struthion.

"Then my gentleman may come back with me directly to Abdera, — to a magistrate. There we will see which of us is right. As Priapus shall help me and my ass, I will see who shall take my ass's shadow from me against my will!"

The dentist was greatly tempted to set the ass-driver right by the strength of his arm. He had already clenched his fist for the purpose; but when he surveyed his man more closely, he thought best to let his uplifted arm gradually fall again, and to try once more the effect of milder arguments. But he only wasted his breath. The rough fellow insisted on being paid for the shadow of his ass; and as Struthion was just as determined not to pay, there was no other way but to return to Abdera, and to lay the matter before the city judge.

The city judge, Philippides, to whom all disputes of this kind had in the first instance to be referred, was a man possessed of

many good qualities, — honest, sober, devoted to the work of his office. He listened to every one with the greatest patience, gave people friendly directions, and was universally reputed to be incorruptible. For the rest, he was a good musician, made collections of objects of natural history, had written some plays, — which, according to the custom of the city, had been well received, — and was sure, whenever a vacancy occurred, to obtain the office of nomophylax. With all these excellences, the good Philippides had but one fault; and that was, that whenever two parties appeared before him, the one who spoke last always appeared to him to be in the right. The Abderites were not so stupid as not to have observed that; but they thought that a man who had so many good qualities might be pardoned this one fault.

So, then, the dentist Struthion and the ass-driver Anthrax rushed, all on fire as they were, into the presence of this worthy judge, and both at once, with great vociferation, presented their complaint. He listened to them with his usual patience; and when at last they had ended, or were tired of shouting, he shrugged his shoulders, and thought the case one of the most complicated that had ever been brought before him.

“Which of you two,” he asked, “is, properly speaking, the plaintiff?”

“I,” answered Struthion; “I prefer my complaint against the man of the ass for having violated our contract.”

“And I,” said the other, “bring a complaint against the dentist for taking, without payment, what he had not hired of me.”

“So we have two plaintiffs,” said the judge; “and who is the defendant? A curious suit! Relate to me the whole case once more; but one at a time, for it is impossible to understand anything when you are both screaming together.”

“May it please your Honor,” said the dentist, “I hired of this man the use of the ass for the day. It is true, nothing was said about the ass’s shadow; but who ever heard of inserting in such a contract a clause about shadow? By Hercules! this is not the first ass that was ever hired in Abdera.”



"The gentleman is right, there," said the judge.

"The ass and his shadow go together," continued Struthion; "and why should not one who has hired the ass have the *usu-fruct* of his shadow?"

"The shadow is an *accessorium*; that is clear," said the judge.

"Honored Sir," cried the ass-driver, "I am a plain man. I know nothing about your *oriuns*; but this my four senses tell me, that I am not bound to let my ass stand in the sun for nothing, in order that another man may seat himself in his shadow. I let the ass to this gentleman, and he paid me half the price in advance; that I own. But the ass is one thing; the shadow another."

"That is true," muttered the judge.

"If he wants the shadow, let him pay half the price of the ass itself. I demand nothing but what is reasonable, and I beg you to help me to my rights."

The judge was sorely perplexed.

"Where is the ass?" he finally asked, that being the only thing that occurred to him in his anxiety to gain time.

"He is standing in the street before the door, your Honor."

"Bring him into the court-yard," said Philippides.

The owner of the ass hastened to obey the order; he considered it a good sign that the judge wanted to see the principal personage in the controversy. The ass was led in. Pity he could not express his own opinion of the case! But there he stood, — quietly looked, with ears erect, first at the two gentlemen, then at his master, twitched his mouth, let his ears fall again, — and said never a word.

"There, see yourself, kind Mr. Judge; is not the shadow of such a handsome stately ass worth two drachmas between friends, especially on such a hot day?"

A process regarding the shadow of an ass would doubtless have attracted attention in any city of the world; it may be imagined what a sensation it caused in Abdera. Scarcely had the



report of it gone forth, when from that moment all other topics of social entertainment were abandoned, and everybody discoursed about this suit with as much interest as if he had personally a great deal to gain or to lose by it. Some declared themselves for the dentist, others for the ass-driver. Even the ass himself had his friends, who thought that he ought, by a writ of *interveniendo*, to come in for damages, as having suffered the greatest injury of the three, by being expected to stand in the burning sun in order that the dentist might sit in his shadow. In a word, said ass had cast his shadow over all Abdera; and the matter was pursued with an animation, a zeal, an interest, which could not have been greater if the salvation of the city and the republic had been at stake.

The names "Shadow" and "Ass" began all at once to be heard in Abdera, and in a short time were universally employed to designate the two parties.

And with the acquisition of a name, the zeal on both sides increased to that extent that it was no longer permitted to any one to be neutral. "Are you a Shadow or Ass?" was always the first question which citizens put to each other when they met in the street or in the tavern. And if it happened to a Shadow, in one of these places, to be the only one of his party among a number of Asses, he must either betake himself to flight or apostatize on the spot; or else, with vigorous kicks, to be turned out of doors. . . . The mutual bitterness soon reached that degree that a Shadow would rather starve into a real ghost than purchase a three-pence worth of bread from a baker of the opposite party.

The women, too, as may be supposed, took sides, and you may be sure with not less heat. Indeed, the first blood shed in this strange civil war came from the nails of two huckster women, who had pitched into each other's physiognomy in the public square. It was remarked, that by far the larger number of the Abderitesses took the side of Anthrax; and where, in any house, the husband was a Shadow, one might be sure that

the wife was an Ass, and usually as passionate and indomitable a she-ass as one can imagine.

Among a number of other partly baleful, partly ridiculous consequences of this party spirit, which took possession of the Abderite women, it was not one of the least that many a love affair was suddenly broken off, because the Seladon would rather renounce his claims on the beloved than give up his party; as, on the other hand, many a one who for years had been suing for the favor of some fair one, and had not succeeded in overcoming her antipathy by any of the measures to which lovers usually resort in such cases, now, of a sudden, found that he needed no other title to the happiness to which he aspired than to satisfy his lady that he was — an Ass.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## HERDER.

THE literature of a nation has been often fructified by writers who have produced no complete work which can be regarded as a measure and interpreter of their genius, — writers who have swayed the mind of their time by pregnant hints, by luminous suggestions, by discovery of hidden or neglected treasures, by opening new views, by research and illustration, rather than by original works of literary art. Such was Coleridge in English literature; such were the Schlegels in Germany; and — greater than Coleridge or the Schlegels — such was Johann Gottfried Herder, a man of intellectually colossal proportions, who wrote on nearly every topic of literature and art, and touched no subject which he did not illumine, but who in all his voluminous writings produced no one great masterpiece — no finished whole — which may be regarded as a worthy monument of such a mind and such a life. Even his principal work, and that by which he is best known abroad, — his “*Philosophy of History*,” — is not a systematic treatise, but a collection of materials, as the name imports, “*Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*.” Yet no one, not even Lessing, did more to raise the literature of his country, and to stimulate the national mind. What Lessing initiated

by negative methods, — by demonstrative criticism, by checking false tendencies, by emancipating his countrymen from enslavement to mistaken ideals, from the tyranny of foreign rules, from the worship of strange gods, — Herder seconded and advanced by diffusion of positive ideas, by his unprovincialism, his cosmopolitan breadth; by bringing the literatures, not of classical Europe only, but of all nations, civilized and savage, into view; especially by directing attention to the primal fountains of song, to the poetry of the people, — *Volks poesie*, — as distinguished from that which is intellectual and artificial.

Lessing's influence was that of critical authority: he saw everything in the dry light of the understanding; his judgments were based on rule and measure. In Herder's æsthetic there mingled sentiment, the loving thought, the moral sympathy with which his catholic heart embraced the most diverse and even contradictory in literature, — the Oriental, the classic, the romantic, Greek, and mediæval song. His influence was due not so much to accredited judgment as it was to admiring advocacy and prophetic enthusiasm.

The circumstances of his nativity and childhood were such as are commonly supposed to be more conducive to moral growth and the formation of a manly character than to intellectual development.

The father, sexton of the parish church, and teacher of a primary school for girls in the little town of Mohrungen, in East Prussia, where Herder was born in 1744, was too poor to aid his son in the way of a liberal education. But he inspired in him his own exact sense of duty and order, his persevering industry, his incorruptible integrity, his awful reverence. The domestic



economy was pinched to the verge of want ; but penury does not always freeze the current of the soul. In young Herder the strength of the current defied the frost ; wealth of native endowment compensated the stern privations of the house.

The rector of the city school, whose name was Grimm, and whose discipline answered to the name, laid deep and strong in the boyish mind the foundations on which in riper years was reared the solid and vast structure of Herder's learning, enforcing with inexorable strictness the knowledge of grammatical rules, and dwelling on every lesson until all that could be wrung from it had been thoroughly appropriated by the memory and the understanding. To his best scholars — of whom young Gottfried was one — he was so far indulgent that he took them with him in his walks, and made them hunt for the herbs which furnished his daily tea. On rare occasions he would even bestow on them a cup of the tea itself, with a minute portion of sugar. This was a distinction never to be forgotten ; and Herder did not forget it when adverting, in conversation with friends, to the scenes and events of his boyhood. To native shyness and timidity, confirmed by the discipline of the school, he added extreme sensibility. He speaks of being moved to tears when, as a school-boy, he read Homer's comparison of the generations of men to the leaves of a season.<sup>1</sup> The passage is a beautiful one, but probably no school-boy before or since was ever affected by it in that way. His love of knowledge was insatiable, but poverty precluded the coveted supply of books. Borowski relates that when in his walks through the streets he saw one lying in the

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad*, vi. 146.

window of any house, he would knock at the door and request the loan of it.

There came to Mohrungen a clergyman by the name of Trescho, who, perceiving in Herder a youth of uncommon promise, took him into his house in the capacity of *famulus*,—a relation involving professional aid, but requiring no menial service. The advantage to Herder of this position was the use of Trescho's well-stocked library, which was granted to him without stint. One night, when the youth had retired to his room with a lighted candle and an armful of books, the master, careful before going to bed himself to ascertain if the candle were duly extinguished, found the floor strewn with books, some of which were lying open, young Herder in the midst of them fast asleep, and the candle burning. The books were mostly Latin and Greek classics. On being reproved the next morning for his carelessness, and questioned if he could make use of such books, he answered, modestly, "I am endeavoring to understand them." "Then," says Trescho, "I discovered that, instead of a Mohrungen school-boy, I had before me a man who must be transplanted to quite another school for the development of his great mind, unless a species of intellectual murder were to be perpetrated upon him, and a life, which appeared to have been created for great ends, extinguished with its first breath."

It does not appear, however, that Trescho contributed in any way to promote this transplanting. The youth seemed doomed, with all his aspirations, and in spite of these and other indications of a literary calling, to forego the advantages of a thorough intellectual training, and even perhaps to earn his bread by mechanical labor, when — by a turn of fortune which Herder afterward

regarded as a part of that special Providence which at several points in his history he believed had interposed in his behalf — he attracted the notice of an army surgeon belonging to a regiment stationed at Mohrungen on its return from the Seven Years' War. This officer proposed to take him to Königsberg, and to furnish him with the means of studying surgery; in return for which young Herder was to translate a medical treatise, the work of his patron, into Latin. To Königsberg he went, and the medical treatise was translated into excellent Latin; but the plan of a surgical profession was frustrated by an invincible repugnance contracted in the dissecting-room, where, on his first visit, he fainted away. Never after could he even bear to hear of a surgical operation. His position was embarrassing. Only as a student of medicine could he look for support; but to return to Mohrungen would have been a confession of weakness and defeat. With some slight help from home, with encouragement from friends in Königsberg, and the hope of being able to earn a little by literary work, he determined to remain and to study theology, which had always been his preference among the learned professions. In vain his would-be patron represented to him that as a physician, especially in St. Petersburg, — whither he ought to go, — he might make his fortune, whereas the life of a Prussian clergyman was one of perpetual struggle and privation. As a theologian he had himself inscribed; and as such, after a satisfactory examination, he was matriculated in the University of Königsberg. It was a good fight which the brave young student fought with extreme poverty in the earlier portion of his academic life, — bare bread, and not too much of that, being often his only diet. Later, he ob-



tained the post of teacher in the Collegium Fredericianum, and from that time forth the pressure of want was removed.

At the University he heard, among other celebrities, the illustrious Kant, for whom he entertained the reverence due to the foremost mind of his time. But the nihilism of the Critical Philosophy did not accord with Herder's affirmative spirit and his craving for positive convictions. So far from being a disciple of that philosophy, he became in after years its active opponent, assailing its fundamental principles in an essay which he entitled "*Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft.*" The strongest influence he experienced in Königsberg was exercised by John George Hamann, a writer of note, by reason of his oracular utterances styled "*The Magician of the North,*" — a man whom many of his contemporaries extol, and to whom even Goethe ascribes extraordinary merit. The reputation which Hamann enjoyed in his own day is not justified to the present generation by his published writings, which have passed into general neglect. But a man of extraordinary intellect he must have been to have so impressed the best minds of his time. I suppose the influence he exerted on such was due to certain hints and suggestions anticipating the thought and literary bias of the coming age, which others wrought out, rather than to any finished or really valuable performance of his own. Then, too, a universal censor — and such Hamann appears to have been — is apt to get credit for powers he does not possess. He who blames the doings of others must, it is thought, be able, if he chose, to do better himself, — a natural but very mistaken conclusion. Goethe, speaking of his own experience of the man, says : —



“He was as much a riddle to us then as he has always been to his country. His ‘Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten’ excited attention, and were especially welcome to those who could not reconcile themselves with the dazzling spirit of the time. They led one to surmise a deep-thinking, thorough man, who, being well acquainted with the visible world and literature, recognized at the same time something secret, unfathomable, and had his own peculiar way of talking about it. . . . In his endeavor to effect the impossible, he grasps after all the elements, — the deepest, most secret intuitions, where nature and mind encounter each other, luminous flashes of intelligence which gleam from such encounter, significant images which float in those regions, impressive sayings of sacred and profane writers, with all sorts of humorous additions. These together constitute the wondrous whole of his communications. When we find that we cannot join him in the deeps, nor walk with him on the heights; that we cannot possess ourselves of the images which hover before his mind, and in an endless stretch of literature cannot make out the sense of a mere intimation, — it grows thicker and darker about us the more we study him; and this darkness will increase with future years, because his allusions were especially directed to certain momentarily dominant peculiarities in literature and life.”

So Goethe prophesied, and so it has come to pass; and Hamann is left to perish in the obscurity in which while living he chose to dwell. Gervinus, a less friendly critic, speaks of him as starting a hundred important and unimportant questions without contributing in the least to their solution, except by showing how little others had contributed; “always reserved, because equally conscious of his superiority and his weakness, and because, being a man of extremes, he would rather be nothing if he could not be everything; always abounding in scattered thoughts and suggestions, which often,

like lightning, gave forth a dazzling light, never clearness and warmth; sometimes even a delusive gleam, like that of will-of-the-wisps. He is the real negative principle opposed to our elder literature; . . . his writings are thrown into the nation like yeast, not food in themselves, but producing on the whole a needful ferment." Certain it is that Herder was indebted to him as to no one else for the earlier tone and the general direction of his literary labors. From Hamann he derived the impulse which led him to the study, and created in him the love, of Oriental, especially of Hebrew, literature. From Hamann he derived his taste for parables and paramyths; from Hamann his life-long interest in the *Volks poesie* — the peoples' poetry — of all nations, which he manifested by diligent researches in that direction, and by translations from various languages. Hamann taught him English; they read "Hamlet" together, which Herder knew almost by heart.

In 1764, at the age of twenty, he received and accepted an invitation to the double office of preacher and assistant teacher of the Cathedral school in the city of Riga, in Russia, — a Livonian city, inhabited chiefly by Germans of the Lutheran faith. Here he spent five of the most important and happiest years of his life, made many life-long friends, and wrote his "Kritische Wälder," and his "Fragmente zur deutschen Literatur." An urgent desire to see more of the world before setting himself fairly to his life's work, induced him to resign his office. In 1769 he went to France, where he remained long enough to acquire the command of the French language, intending afterward to visit other portions of Europe, and to make himself acquainted with the best educational establishments abroad, with a view

to found, on his return, with the assistance of the Government, a model school at Riga. In Paris he became acquainted with d'Alembert, with Arnauld, with Diderot, and other distinguished men of the time.

While in Paris he received from Denmark an invitation to accompany, as teacher, the young prince of Holstein-Eutin on his travels. The appointment was to cover the term of three years, and the prince's tutor, Herr von Kappelman, was to be one of the party. With much hesitation, Herder finally accepted the office. It obliged him to abandon his scheme of a high-school at Riga, but on the other hand presented an opportunity which might never be repeated of foreign travel. He was expected to preach for the benefit of the prince in places where there was no evangelical church; to repeat with him the substance of the lectures he might attend in the universities he should visit; to read with him the Latin classics, and to aid him in forming a good German style. For this he was to receive, in addition to his travelling expenses, an annual stipend of three hundred thalers, and to be considered a candidate for the next vacant office of preacher, or of professor at the University of Kiel, at the expiration of the three years. By the advice of Resewitz, who communicated the proposal, Herder stipulated for an additional one hundred thalers for the defraying of his travelling expenses to Eutin, where he was to meet his charge, and for continued support after their travels, until he should receive the promised office. When these terms were settled, he left France and proceeded to Belgium, where, after inspecting the principal works of art in Brussels and Antwerp, he set sail from the latter place for Amsterdam, and barely escaped death by shipwreck on the



passage. In a dark night the vessel struck a sand-bank on the coast of Holland, not far from the Hague, and there stuck fast. Signal-guns were fired all night, and in the morning fishermen came to the rescue with their boats. With difficulty, through a heavy sea, they brought off the passengers and the crew, amid storm and surf, to the nearest shore. They had scarcely landed, when the vessel went to pieces before their eyes. Herder, who in those years was an ardent admirer of Ossian, occupied these hours of terror with the songs of the storm-breathing bard. In a letter to a friend, inserted in his essay entitled "*Ossian and the Songs of Ancient Peoples*," he wrote : —

"I read Ossian in situations where few others have read him. You know the adventure of my voyage, but you cannot imagine the effect of such a voyage as one feels it at the time. . . . To hover between heaven and the abyss on a plank on the open all-wide sea, member of a little State governed by stricter laws than the Republic of Lycurgus; in the midst of the spectacle of a quite other living and working nature, with the songs of the old Skalds in one's head, one's whole soul filled with them, in the very places they commemorate; . . . across the sands where the Vikings with their sword and their love roamed through the seas on 'the steeds of the earth-girdle' (their ships), past the coasts where Fingal's deeds were done and Ossian's songs of sorrow were sung, in the same air, the same world, the same silence: believe me, Skalds and Bards read there very differently from the reading of them at the professor's desk, — Homer, amid the ruins of Troy; Argonauts, Odysseys, and Lusiads, by swelling sail and rattling rudder; the tale of 'Uthal and Nina-thoma,' in sight of the island of which it tells. . . . The feeling is still in me of that night, when on a foundering ship, no longer moved by storm or flood, washed by the sea, breathed upon as with spirits' breath by the midnight wind, I read Fingal, and hoped for morning."



In Amsterdam and Leiden Herder made the acquaintance of some of the eminent scholars of the country ; and passing on from there to Hamburg he spent some happy days in company with Lessing, then a visitor in that city, whom he had long known and admired as a writer, and to whose merits he afterward reared a fitting monument in his “*Denkmal Gotthold Ephraim Lessings.*”

In Eutin he was graciously received by the duke and duchess, the parents of the prince in whose education he was called to assist. For this noble pair he entertained through life a reverential and affectionate regard. After a few months spent at their court, he entered on the journey in which he was to accompany the prince and his tutor, and travelled with them as far as Strasburg. But the choice of the tutor had proved an unfortunate one, and Herder found himself so much at variance with von Kappellmann in his views concerning the management of their charge, that he wrote to the duke to be released from his engagement. Seeing no other way of adjusting the difficulty, the duke reluctantly consented to accept his resignation ; and Herder, who had long been suffering with a troublesome disease in one of his eyes, remained in Strasburg, awaiting the result of an operation from which the oculist Lobstein promised a radical cure. Meanwhile, in Darmstadt, one of the cities in which the party had tarried for some weeks on their route, he had made the acquaintance of a lady of rare intelligence, Mary Caroline Flachsman, his future wife. That the attraction on his part was fully reciprocated on hers appears from her own enthusiastic confession : —

“ On the 19th of August, Herder preached in the Castle Church. I heard the voice of an angel and words of the soul

such as I had never heard before. I cannot describe the peculiar, unique impression which I then experienced for the first time. A messenger from heaven stood before me in human form. In the afternoon I saw him and stammered my thanks. From this time forth our souls were one, and are one. Our finding each other was the work of God. A more perfect understanding, a more intimate relation, between two souls there cannot be."

In Strasburg Herder spent unhappy months in close confinement in the hands of the physician to whom he had intrusted the care and cure of his eye. Repeated operations, attended with great pain, which he bore with heroic fortitude, proved unsuccessful; the disease, which consisted in a stoppage of the lachrymal duct, was aggravated rather than relieved by unskilful treatment; time and money had been spent in vain; his sight was not impaired, but a life-long blemish disfigured his otherwise noble countenance. His only gain from the weary six months of this trial was a personal acquaintance with Goethe, then a student of law at Strasburg, who was often, as Herder wrote to his betrothed, his only visitor, and whose goodness of heart the sufferer warmly commends.

We find him next, by invitation of Count Wilhelm of Schaumburg-Lippe, in 1770, established at Bückeburg on the Weser as court preacher and primate of that little principality. During the five years of his residence there he wrote some of his most important works; among others his "Earliest Records of the Human Race," and the first part of his "Ideas for a Philosophy of History;" and thither, in 1773, he brought from Darmstadt the accomplished bride who more and more brightened his earthly lot, and than

whom, it is likely, no literary man had ever a truer helpmate.

In 1776 there came to him from the Hanoverian government a call to the office of fourth Professor of Theology and University preacher in the University of Göttingen. For that University he had always entertained a strong predilection, and had coveted a position on its staff of instruction; but the call was burdened with conditions which made him hesitate. Not having received the degree of Doctor of Theology, he must submit to an examination and give proof of his orthodoxy. While debating with himself the acceptance of these terms he received, through the mediation of Goethe, an invitation from the Grand Duke of Weimar to fill the office of Superintendent of the ecclesiastical department of his State. The office of superintendent in the Lutheran church corresponds to that of bishop in the English. To this invitation he gave at once a joyful assent; and on the second of October, 1776, at the age of thirty-two, he entered with his family the little capital, the German Athens, where he spent the remainder of his life.

Fitter position, if the auspices held good, more complete adaptation of the man to the place, had seldom fallen to any scholar's lot. In the Grand Duke he was sure of a wise, high-minded, and generous patron. Two devoted and admiring patronesses he found in the two duchesses, — the reigning duchess, and the duchess dowager Amalia. In Goethe he had a stanch and efficient friend; in Wieland, von Knebel, Dahlmann, Einsiedel, and many others, the choicest literary society and intellectual fellowship. But with all these advantages, and all the attractions of such a community, his life in Weimar was not the elysium he expected to find it. Patronage and



friendship he gratefully enjoyed ; but something more was demanded by an enterprising spirit that sought satisfaction in useful and beneficent action. Society, even of the best, is but the occasional feast ; the staff of life for every man is his daily work. And here it was that Herder found himself baffled and thwarted and hampered in unlooked-for ways at every turn. Official jealousy, blind prejudice, unreasoning opposition to needful reform, collision with narrow, intractable minds, defeated his plans and embittered his life ; and when in 1789 a second invitation to Göttingen, unhampered by the former offensive conditions, was extended to him by the Hanoverian government, approved in London and urged by Heyne and other influential friends, it was only a feeling of strong obligation to the Grand Duke that prevented its acceptance. Even that could not prevent, in after years, some feeling of regret at having declined the last chance of a better lot. He often bewailed the failure of his life. " O mein verfehltes Leben ! " he would say, comparing the reality of his experience with the fond ideals of his youth. Meanwhile, against all discouragements and misapprehensions, he labored with unflagging zeal in the work of his office, preaching eloquent sermons, preparing manuals, inspecting schools, examining and placing candidates, and introducing such reforms in church discipline as the bigotry of his associates would allow. And still, amid all the pressure of official duties, he found time for the literary labors which he ever regarded as his true vocation, and sent forth into the world in rapid succession the works which have made him famous. His completed " Philosophy of History," his " Adrastea," his " Letters for the Furtherance of Humanity," his " Spirit of Hebrew Poetry," his " Volkslie-



der," his "Cid," are the products of this period. These and other works, which might have been a life-task for ordinary men, were his amusement and the solace of many bitter woes. A life of official drudgery was further relieved by an unlooked-for gleam of good fortune and the intercalation of a year of rest. The dream of his youth was fulfilled at last in the opportunity of Italian travel. His wife as biographer writes : —

"In the year 1788, on the 10th of March, we received by mail a gift of two thousand florins rhenish, in ducats, with a letter from an unknown hand. The letter ran thus : 'Do not reject this slight offering of the greatest veneration ; do not repay my good-will with contempt, nor deprive me of the sweet consolation of thinking that even I may contribute to the ease and satisfaction of a great man. Be not offended, for my wish and aim are pure. Forget the unknown who writes this, and also the occasion of the writing. You will never learn who I am. Be silent concerning it, as I shall ever be silent.'"

The letter was franked to Eisenach, about twenty-five miles from Weimar ; it bore two addresses, in one of which Weimar was spelt *ai* instead of *ei*. The cover showed hard use, as if coming from a distance ; and the letter itself indicated three different hands, of which two at least were feminine. The donor was never ascertained. The gift was most opportune ; the domestic economy had fallen into debt, and pressing arrears could now be paid.

The saying, "It never rains but it pours," seemed likely to be verified. Ten days after this event, — which of course was kept secret during Herder's lifetime, — a note from the Grand Duke informed him that his salary, which had hitherto amounted but to twelve hundred

thalers, would be increased by three hundred thalers out of the Duke's private purse. A few weeks later came a letter from Freiherr von Dalberg, canon of Worms and Speyer, inviting Herder to accompany him in a journey to Italy. A furlough was readily granted by the Duke, and on the 6th of August of that year, two months after Goethe's return, Herder started on his tour.

His Italian experience, if not so fruitful as Goethe's, — owing in part to weaker affinities; in part to less thorough preparation, — was nevertheless an important epoch in his life. He writes to his wife: —

“In how many things this journey has made me wiser! How many sides of my being it has touched, gently or roughly, of whose existence I was scarcely aware! This I know for a certainty: it has opened my eyes with regard to men, and forced me to recognize what is really valuable in life; and especially to appreciate truth and love, of which there is so little in the world. Thus Italy, and Rome especially, has been for me a high-school, not so much of art as of life. You will find, when I return, that I am grown more serious; but do not fear my seriousness, — it will only bind me the closer to you and to all my beloved.”

I am led to suspect from this and other passages in his letters that Rome, on the whole, was a disappointment to him. Its treasures and its glories did not compensate the discomfort of the stranger in a far country, sighing for the blandishments of his Northern home, dearer to him than all that art and antiquity could offer. The exceeding sensitiveness of his nature, and what may be termed the preponderant subjectivity of his mental life, made the rubs and annoyances, social and other, of foreign travel more galling to him than to more robust natures. Herein he differed from Goethe, who

could come out of self and live in objects, and who when in Rome was *all* there. Herder, for one thing, found the wife of his friend Dalberg — in whose society and by whose invitation he had undertaken the journey — a thorn in his side, and finally left the party and took separate lodgings. Altogether, he appears to have been ill at ease. He writes : —

“Rome enervates the mind ; . . . it is the grave of a perished world, in which one soon accustoms one’s self to quiet dreaming and dear idleness. It has not, to be sure, that effect upon me ; I do not easily let a day pass without seeing sights, or busying myself about something. Yet for me, too, it is a grave from which I begin to wish myself away.”

And yet he received attention which must have been gratifying, not only from his own countrymen then resident in Rome, but from native nobles as well ; cardinals, monsignori, and others paid their court to the stranger. “But all this,” he says, “is mere spectacle, and begins to weary me. Still it is well to have seen this spectacle, since there is no time to think of anything more serious.” The person who seems to have interested him most was the celebrated lady-painter Angelica Kaufmann, to whom, while in Rome, he sat for his portrait. He again writes : —

“The Angelica is a tender, virginal soul, like a Madonna, or a little dove. In a small company, with two or three, she is altogether lovely. But she lives very retired, I might say in a pictorial, ideal world, in which the bird but touches fruits and flowers with her little bill. Her old Zucchi [the Venetian painter whom she married] is a brave man in his way ; but he always seems to me like an old Venetian as represented on the stage.”

On his return to Rome, after a brief sojourn at Naples, he writes to his wife : —

“ Altogether, Angelica is my best comforter. The more I become acquainted with her, the more I learn to love this maidenly artistic nature, — a true celestial Muse, full of grace, delicacy, modesty, and an unspeakable goodness of heart.

“ Her impression will be a life-long benefit to me, as of one far removed from all flirtation, vanity, and falsehood. Of all that, she knows nothing ; and with all her humility and angelic transparency and innocence, she is perhaps the most cultivated woman in Europe. . . . I let her read lately the passage in your letter in which you speak of her. She suddenly burst into tears, and it was long before she regained her composure. She said to me lately, in her quiet way, that she wished to die with us at least, since she could not live with us ; at any rate, that she must make your acquaintance if she did not die too soon. I believe for a certainty we have in her a true soul-treasure of our life. As soon as she has leisure, she means to paint her picture for you.”

His letters from Italy are mostly addressed to his family ; and a pleasant view of German home life, and of Herder's affectionate nature is given in his letters to his children. He wrote to each singly, but the following is to the whole household : —

ROME, Oct. 15, 1788.

MY DEAR GOOD CHILDREN, — You have given me so much pleasure with your letters that I owe several to each one of you, and I mean very soon to pay the debt. To you, dear good Gottfried, I shall write about Roman antiquities ; to you, dear August, of beautiful gods and goddesses ; to you, brave Wilhelm, of fine buildings, the rotunda and others ; to you, stalwart Adelbert, of Italian oxen, cows, and trees ; to you, little



Louise, of gardens and beautiful pictures ; to you, dear Emil, of grapes and other nice things. . . . I am glad, dear children, that you are so industrious, obedient, and well behaved. I thank you, Gottfried, that you take such good care of my library, and write me such nice letters ; you, too, dear August and good Wilhelm. And I am pleased that Herr Krause gives such a good account of your drawing. It is a grief to me every moment that I can't draw. I am like a dumb man who has thoughts, but can't express them. Therefore, dear children, learn to draw well, and be diligent, too, in studying languages. And, Gottfried, it would do no harm if you should begin to play the piano again, so that you may learn to play with real expression. When I read your letter to Herr Rehberg, who is an excellent painter, — the letter in which you say that you mean to be an Albrecht Dürer, — he asked me why I did n't bring you with me. But it is too soon for that ; you must learn a great many things before you go to Italy. It is good that you have begun Greek ; it is the finest language on earth. Be very industrious. Dear Luischen, you are learning very pretty hymns ; and your little notes to me are very nice. I like especially the hymn, "Thy ways to God commend." You must also learn some verses of the hymn, "I'll sing to Thee with Heart and Mouth ;" it is a beautiful hymn, that. Dear Emil, I would like to see you in your little new beaver dress ; but you will have done wearing it when I come back. Be careful of it, you good little boy, and mind you love me. Your little letters give me much pleasure ; you are very smart and a little Gottfried. And now, good-by, all of you, my dear good children, — Gottfried, August, Wilhelm, Adelbert ; and you my little woman and little Emil, who are so fond of writing to me. Good-by ! Behave well ; be happy and diligent and obedient. Farewell ! all of you.

If in Rome Herder felt, as so many others have done, oppressed and unnerved by the genius of the place, in Naples, on the contrary, whither he went by invitation of the Duchess Amalia, he was all himself again. Nature

was more to him than antiquity and art. The climate, the sea, the delicious air soothed and renewed him in body and mind. He writes:—

“I am happy in Naples. . . . In spite of the cold [the winter was one of unusual severity, surprising the Neapolitans with the rare visitation of snow and ice], the air here is such as I never before experienced, — balmy and refreshing. Freed from oppressive Rome, I feel myself quite another person, — spiritually and bodily new born. . . . I can believe the Neapolitans, that when God wishes to have a good time, he just posts himself at the window of heaven and looks down on Naples. I see, or begin to feel, how one might be a Greek. . . . Oh, if I only had you all in Naples! If we could live out our bit of life here! You, a Grecian, ought to live here. . . . No cloud can come or remain on any one’s brow in this atmosphere; one gives it to the winds. . . . Rome is a den of murderers compared with this; and I now see very well why I was never happy there. . . . Farewell, angel! think of your lonely Ulysses by the sea-shore. All good spirits be with you! my longing sends them to you over sea and mountains, and draws you oft hither in my thoughts.”

In the midsummer of 1789 Herder returned to Weimar, where the call to Göttingen still awaited his decision. His friends would not hear of his leaving Weimar, and insisted that he should not accept before consulting with them. Everything was urged with wild exaggeration that could prejudice him against University life, compared with which, it was alleged, his present position was a path of roses. “Goethe,” says his wife, “now showed himself a true friend; he would not interfere; he would not mislead; he only spoke of the danger of a change at Herder’s time of life, and begged that he and his wife would consider as calmly as possible the two situations.” It was long before Herder could decide.

"The voice of his genius was for Göttingen;" but, as I have said, his gratitude to the reigning family, a feeling of obligation to continue in their service, and the wishes of friends whom he greatly esteemed, prevailed against his better judgment. With a heavy heart and strong internal struggle, he renounced what seemed to him a fairer lot. Whether it would have proved so is very doubtful. The truth is, it was not in Herder's oversensitive and self-willed nature to adjust himself completely with the world as it was and is; to fall into pleasant official relations with his fellow-men, or to find satisfaction anywhere but in the circle of his family and nearest friends. Heaven had bestowed on him one gift, than which no fairer ever falls to the lot of man, — a perfect wife. Would he reckon truly with his destiny, the rubs and stings of public converse, so grievous to his soul, were compensated by that one gift. He had drawn the highest prize in the lottery of life, and could claim no right to anything more.

The remaining fourteen years of his life were spent in Weimar, where the pressure of official duty and frequent illness (for his bodily constitution was prematurely broken) allowed little time for literary labor. And yet some of his most important works are the product of this period,— among others, the "*Adrastæa*," the "*Letters for the Promotion of Humanity*," the "*Letters on Persepolis*," the closing part of his contributions to the "*Philosophy of History*," and his translation of the "*Cid*."

In the first years of this century an affection of the eyes, which gave him the feeling, as he expressed it, of looking through a veil, impaired the free use of books and pen, and would, had his life been prolonged, have



ended in total blindness. From this calamity, which meant more to him than to most men, he was saved by death. With failing vision his health, which had long been declining, declined more rapidly, until after a brief illness, in which his son Gottfried was his attendant physician, he passed without a pang to his final rest. On the 18th of December, 1803, Weimar lost, if not its brightest genius, its most devout and consecrated soul. A mourning city, with literary friends from abroad, assisted at his obsequies; the funeral sermon — pronounced, as is usual in Germany, at the grave — was listened to by more than four thousand hearers. “Light, Love, Life,” is the epithet inscribed on his tombstone. Tributes from all quarters, in verse and prose, expressed the wide sympathy of his spiritual peers, — among them one from the Archbishop of Tarento at Naples, in Latin distich, addressed to the Duchess Amalia, the honored friend of both.

The most appreciative, as well as the most glowing, of these tributes flowed from the pen of Jean Paul. Says this grateful friend and enthusiastic admirer: —

“If he was misunderstood by opposing times and parties, it was not altogether without fault of his own. His fault was that he was no star of first or any other magnitude, but a whole cluster of stars, out of which each one spells a constellation to suit himself. . . . Men with powers of various kinds are always misunderstood; those with powers of only one kind seldom. . . . If he was no poet, — as he often indeed thought of himself and other very celebrated ones, planting himself as he did close by the Homeric and Shakspearian standard, — then he was merely something better; and that is, a poem, an Indian-Greek epos, made by some purest god. . . . Greece was to him the highest; and however universal and epic-cosmopolitan his taste, he still clung, like a much-wandered Odysseus, after his return from all-



blossom lands, to his Greek home. . . . Few minds are learned after the same grand fashion as he. . . . Many are clasped by their learning as by a withering ivy; but he as by a grape-vine . . . He combined the boldest freedom of philosophy with the most pious faith. . . . His life was a shining exception to the often-tainted life of genius. He sacrificed like the ancient priests, even at the altar of the Muses, only with white garments."

To the greater part of this panegyric the students of Herder will cordially assent; but not, I think, to the view which claims for its subject a Grecian order of mind. Such claim is vitiated by the *dilettante* and anthropological character, so to speak, of Herder's genius. With all his learning and immense capacity he has given to the world, as I have said, no one great work, — neither drama, nor epic, nor novel, nor history, — no finished whole of wider scope than the parables and paramyths, and occasional short poems contained in his "Zerstreute Blätter." His genius was encyclopædic, not plastic. He was no artist; he wanted the shaping power, which, united to his warm poetic feeling and wondrous wealth of intellect, would have made him the first poet of his age. The forty volumes of Müller's edition of his writings, though exhibiting no complete work, are otherwise a literature in themselves, — an encyclopædia of theology, philosophy, history, biography, criticism, ethnology, antiquarian research, and poetic lore; and, added to all, numerous translations and paraphrases of poems and songs, from the Spanish "Cid" to such trifles as "John Anderson my Jo," and "Love will find out the way." An indefatigable *littérateur*, but no artist. Like King David, he collected materials from all quarters, but it was not given to him to rear a temple therewith.

It would be difficult to say what work of Herder is especially representative of the genius of the man; they all represent it, inasmuch as the moral sentiment predominates in them all. A few quotations may suffice to illustrate, not so much his literary talent, as the tone of his mind. Take his definition of Humanity,—an idea to which Herder was largely instrumental in giving the prominence it has in modern thought:—

“Humanity is the characteristic of our race; but only as tendency is it native to man,—it must be developed by education. We do not bring it complete into the world; but in the world it is to be the goal of our endeavor, the sum of our discipline,—it is to constitute our worth. We know no angel in man; and if the dæmon that rules us is not a humane dæmon, we become tormentors of our fellow-men. The divine in our species is therefore the cultivation of humanity. To this have contributed all great and good men,—law-givers, inventors, philosophers, poets, artists; every noble person in his place, by the education of his children, by the faithful discharge of his duties, by example and work, institution and doctrine. Humanity is the prize and outcome of all human endeavors,—as it were the art of our race. Its cultivation is a work that must be prosecuted without end, or we relapse, both high and low, into animality, brutality.”

The following is from the “Tithon and Aurora”:—

“‘Whatsoever is born must die,’ says the Brahman; and that which seeks to defer its downfall by artificial methods, in resorting to such methods has already outlived itself. . . . All orders and institutions of Society are the offspring of Time. The ancient Mother produced, nourished, educated them; she adorned and gave them their outfit; and after a longer or shorter term of life she buries them, as she buries or renews herself. . . . What we call outliving ourselves, which is a kind of death, is with the souls of the better sort but the sleep which

precedes a new waking; a relaxation of the bow which prepares it for new use. So rests the fallow field, in order to produce more plentifully hereafter. So dies the tree in winter, that it may put forth and blossom anew in the spring. Destiny never forsakes the good, so long as he does not forsake himself and ignobly despair. The genius which seemed to have departed from him returns to him again at the right moment, bringing new activity, prosperity, and joy. . . . Sacrifice to this Genius, though you see him not! Hope in returning Fortune, when even you deem her far off. If your left side is sore, lay yourself on the right; if the storm bent your sapling one way, bend it the other way till it stands straight again. You have wearied your memory, then exercise your understanding. You have striven too laboriously after seeming, and it has deceived you; now seek being, — that will not deceive. Unmerited fame has spoiled you; thank Heaven that you are rid of it! and seek in your own worth a fame which cannot be taken away. . . . The Serpent of time often casts her slough, and brings to the man in his cave, if not the fabled jewel on her head and the rose in her mouth, at least medicinal herbs, which procure for him oblivion of the past and restoration to new life.

“Philosophy abounds in remedies designed to console us for misfortunes endured; but unquestionably its best remedy is when it strengthens us to bear new misfortunes, and gives us a firm reliance on ourselves. The illusion which weakens the faculties comes mostly from without. But the objects which environ us are not ourselves. It is sad indeed when the situation in which a man is placed is so embittered that he has no disposition to touch one of its grapes or flowers, because, like apples of Sodom, they turn to ashes in his hands. But the situation is not himself; let him like the tortoise draw in his limbs, and be what he can and ought. The more he disregards the consequences of his acts, the more repose he has in action. . . . The fountain does not stop to calculate through what regions of the earth its streams shall flow; it flows from its own fulness with an irrepressible motion. That which others show us of ourselves is only appearance. It has always some foundation, and is never

to be wholly despised ; but it is only the reflection of our being in them mirrored back to us from their own, — often a broken and blurred image, not our being itself. . . . In the heart we live, and not in the thoughts. The opinion of others may be a favorable or unfavorable wind in our sails. As the ocean its vessels, circumstances may now detain and now further us, but ship and sail, compass, helm, and oar are still our own. Never then, like old Tithon, grow gray in the conceit that your youth has passed away ; rather with new-born activity let a new Aurora daily spring from your arms.”



## CHAPTER XV.

GOETHE.

## I. — THE MAN.

**G**ENIUS of the supreme order presupposes a nature of equal scope as the prime condition of its being. The Gardens of Adonis require little earth, but the oak will not flourish in a tub; and the wine of Tokay is the product of no green-house, nor gotten of sour grapes. Given a genuine great poet, you will find a greater man behind, in whom, among others, these virtues predominate, — courage, generosity, truth.

Pre-eminent among the poets of the modern world stands Goethe, chief of his own generation, challenging comparison with the greatest of all time. His literary activity embraces a span of nigh seventy years in a life of more than four score, beginning, significantly enough, with a poem on “Christ’s Descent into Hell” (his earliest extant composition), and ending with Faust’s — that is, Man’s — ascent into heaven.

The rank of a writer — his spiritual import to human kind — may be inferred from the number and worth of the writings of which he has furnished the topic and occasion. “When kings build,” says Schiller, speaking of Kant’s commentators, “the draymen have plenty to do.” Dante and Shakspeare have created whole libraries through the interest inspired by their writings.

The Goethe-literature, so-called, — though scarce fifty years have elapsed since the poet's death, — already numbers its hundreds of volumes.

I note in this man first of all, as a literary phenomenon, the unexampled fact of supreme excellence in several quite distinct provinces of literary action. Had we only his minor poems, he would rank as the first of lyrists. Had he written only "Faust," he would be the first of philosophic poets. Had he written only "Hermann and Dorothea," the sweetest idyllist; if only the "Märchen," the subtlest of allegorists. Had he written never a verse, but only prose, he would hold the highest place among the prose-writers of Germany. And lastly, had he written only on scientific subjects, in that line also — in the field of science — he would be, as he is, an acknowledged leader.

Noticeable in him also is the combination of extraordinary genius with extraordinary fortune. A magnificent person, a sound physique, inherited wealth, high social position, official dignity, with eighty-three years of earthly existence, compose the frame-work of this illustrious life.

Behind the author, behind the poet, behind the world-renowned genius, a not unreasonable curiosity seeks the original man, the human individual as he walked among men, his manner of being, his characteristics as shown in the converse of life. In what soil grew the flowers and ripened the fruits which have been the delight and the aliment of nations? In proportion, of course, to the eminence attained by a writer, — in proportion to the worth of his works, to their hold on the world, — is the interest felt in his personality and behavior, in the incidents of his life. Unfortunately, our

knowledge of the person is not always proportioned to the lustre of the name. Of the two great poets to whom the world's unrepealable verdict has assigned the foremost place in their several kinds, we know in one case absolutely nothing, and next to nothing in the other. To the question, Who sung the wrath of Achilles and the wanderings of the much-versed Odysseus? tradition answers with a name to which no faintest shadow of a person corresponds. To the question, Who composed "Hamlet" and "Othello"? history answers with a person so indistinct, that recent speculation has dared to question the agency of Shakspeare in those creations. What would not the old scholiasts have given for satisfactory proofs of the existence of a Homer identical with the author of the Iliad and the Odyssey? What would not the Shakspeare clubs give for one more authentic anecdote of the world's great dramatist?

Of Goethe we know more — I mean of his externals — than of any other writer of equal note. This is due in part to his wide relations, official and other, with his contemporaries; to his large correspondence with people of note, of which the documents have been preserved by the parties addressed; to the interest felt in him by curious observers living in the day of his greatness. It is due in part also to the fact that, unlike the greatest of his predecessors, he flourished in an all-communicating, all-recording age; and partly it is due to autobiographical notices, embracing important portions of his history.

Two seemingly opposite factors — limiting and qualifying the one the other — determined the course and topics of his life. One was the aim which he proposed to himself as the governing principle and purpose of his being, — to perfect himself, to make the most of

the nature which God had given him ; the other was a constitutional tendency to come out of himself, to lose himself in objects, especially in natural objects, so that in the study of Nature — to which he devoted a large part of his life — he seems not so much a scientific observer as a chosen confidant, to whom the discerning Mother revealed her secrets.

In no greatest genius are all its talents self-derived. Countless influences mould our intellect and mould our heart. One of these, and often one of the most potent, is heredity. Consciously or unconsciously, for good or for evil, physically and mentally, the father and mother are in the child, as indeed all his ancestors are in every man.

Of Goethe's father we know only what the son himself has told us in his memoirs. A man of austere presence, from whom Goethe, as he tells us, inherited his bodily stature and his serious treatment of life, —

“ Vom Vater hab ich die Statur,  
Des Lebens ernstes führen.”

By profession a lawyer, but without practice, living in grim seclusion amid his books and collections ; a man of solid acquirements and large culture, who had travelled in Italy, and first awakened in Wolfgang the longing for that land ; a man of ample means, inhabiting a stately mansion. For the rest, a stiff, narrow-minded, fussy pedant, with small toleration for any methods or aims but his own ; who, while he appreciated the superior gifts of his son, was obstinately bent on guiding them in strict professional grooves, and teased him with the friction of opposing wills.

The opposite, in most respects, of this stately and pedantic worthy was the Frau Rätlin, his youthful wife,



young enough to have been his daughter, — a jocund, exuberant nature, a woman to be loved ; one who blessed society with her presence, and possessed uncommon gifts of discourse. She was but eighteen when Wolfgang was born, — a companion to him and his sister Cornelia ; one in whom they were sure to find sympathy and ready indulgence. Goethe was indebted to her, as he tells us, for his joyous spirit and his narrative talent, —

“ Von Mütterchen die Frohnatur  
Und Lust zu fabuliren.”

Outside of the poet's household, the most important figure in the circle of his childish acquaintance was his mother's father, from whom he had his name, — Johann Wolfgang Textor, the *Schultheiss*, or chief magistrate, of the city. From him Goethe seems to have inherited the superstition of which some curious examples are recorded in his life. He shared with Napoleon and other remarkable men, says Von Müller, the conceit that little mischances are prophetic of greater evils. On a journey to Baden-Baden with a friend, his carriage was upset and his companion slightly injured. He thought it a bad omen, and instead of proceeding to Baden-Baden chose another watering-place for his summer resort. If in his almanac there happened to be a blot on any date, he feared to undertake anything important on the day so marked. He had noted certain fatal days ; one of these was the 22d of March. On that day he had lost a valued friend ; on that day the theatre to which he had devoted so much time and labor was burned ; and on that day, curiously enough, he died. He believed in oracles ; and as Rousseau threw stones at a tree to learn

whether or no he was to be saved (the hitting or not hitting the tree was to be the sign), so Goethe tossed a valuable pocket-knife into the river Lahn to ascertain whether he would succeed as a painter. If behind the bushes which bordered the stream he saw the knife plunge, it should signify success; if not, he would take it as an omen of failure. Rousseau was careful, he tells us, to choose a stout tree, and to stand very near. Goethe, more honest with himself, adopted no such precaution; the plunge of the knife was not seen, and the painter's career was abandoned.

Wordsworth's saying, "The child is father of the man," — a saying which owes its vitality more to its form than its substance, — is not always verified, or its truth is not always apparent in the lives of distinguished men. I find not much in Goethe the child prophetic of Goethe the man. But the singer and the seeker, the two main tendencies of his being, are already apparent in early life. Of moral traits, the most conspicuous in the child is a power of self-control, — a moral heroism, which secured to him in after life a natural leadership unattainable by mere intellectual supremacy. An instance of this self-control is recorded among the anecdotes of his boyhood. At one of the lessons which he shared with other boys, the teacher failed to appear. The young people awaited his coming for a while, but toward the close of the hour most of them departed, leaving behind three who were especially hostile to Goethe. "These," he says, "thought to torment, to mortify, and to drive me away. They left me a moment, and returned with rods taken from a broom which they had cut to pieces. I perceived their intention, and supposing the expiration of the hour to be near, I immediately

determined to make no resistance until the clock should strike. Unmercifully, thereupon, they began to scourge in the cruellest manner my legs and calves. I did not stir, but soon felt that I had miscalculated the time, and that such pain greatly lengthens the minutes." When the hour expired, his superior activity enabled him to master all three, and to pin them to the ground.

In later years the same zeal of self-discipline which prompted the child to exercise himself in bearing pain, impelled the man to resist and overcome constitutional weaknesses by force of will. A student of architecture, he conquered a tendency to giddiness by standing on pinnacles and walking on narrow rafters over perilous abysses. In like manner he overcame the ghostly terrors instilled in the nursery, by midnight visits to church-yards and uncanny places.

To real peril, to fear of death, he seems to have had that native insensibility so notable always in men of genius, in whom the conviction of a higher destiny begets the feeling of a charmed life,—such as Plutarch records of the first Cæsar in peril of shipwreck on the river Anio. In the French campaign (1793), in which Goethe accompanied the Duke of Weimar against the armies of the Republic, a sudden impulse of scientific curiosity prompted him, in spite of warnings and remonstrances, to experiment on what is called the "cannon-fever." For this purpose he rode to a place in which he was exposed to a cross fire of the two armies, and coolly watched the sensations experienced in that place of peril.

Command of himself, acquired by long and systematic discipline, gave him that command over others which he exercised in several memorable instances. Coming



from a ball one night,—a young man fresh from the University,—he saw that a fire had broken out in the Judengasse, and that people were standing about helpless and confused without a leader; he immediately jumped from his carriage, and, full-dressed as he was, in silk stockings and pumps, organized on the spot a fire-brigade, which averted a dangerous conflagration. On another occasion, voyaging in the Mediterranean, he quelled a mutiny on board an Italian ship, when captain and mates were powerless, and the vessel drifting on the rocks, by commanding sailors and passengers to fall on their knees and pray to the Virgin,—adopting the idiom of their religion as well as their speech, of which he was a master.

As a student, first at Leipsic, then at Strasburg, including the years from 1766 to 1771, he seems not to have been a very diligent attendant on the lectures in either university, and to have profited little by professional instruction. In compliance with the wishes of his father, who intended him for a jurist, he gave some time to the study of the law; but on the whole the principal gain of those years was derived from intercourse with distinguished intellectual men and women, whose acquaintance he cultivated, and the large opportunities of social life.

In Strasburg occurred the famous love-passage with Friederike Brion, which terminated so unhappily at the time, and so fortunately in the end, for both.

Goethe has been blamed for not marrying Friederike. His real blame consists in the heedlessness with which, in the beginning of their acquaintance, he surrendered himself to the charm of her presence, thereby engaging her affection without a thought of the consequences



to either. Besides the disillusion, which showed him, when he came fairly to face the question, that he did not love her sufficiently to justify marriage, there were circumstances — material, economical — which made it practically impossible. Her suffering in the separation, great as it was, — so great indeed as to cause a dangerous attack of bodily disease, — could not outweigh the pangs which he endured in his penitent contemplation of the consequences of his folly.

The next five years were spent partly in Frankfort and partly in Wetzlar, partly in the forced exercise of his profession, but chiefly in literary labors and the use of the pencil, which for a time disputed with the pen the devotion of the poet-artist. They may be regarded as perhaps the most fruitful, certainly the most growing, years of his life. They gave birth to "Götz von Berlichingen" and the "Sorrows of Werther," to the first inception of "Faust," and to many of his sweetest lyrics. It was during this period that he made the acquaintance of Charlotte Buff, the heroine of the "Sorrows of Werther," from whom he finally tore himself away, leaving Wetzlar when he discovered that their growing interest in each other was endangering her relation with Kestner, her betrothed. In those years, also, he formed a matrimonial engagement with Elizabeth Schönmann (Lili), the rupture of which, I must think, was a real misfortune for the poet. It came about by no fault of his. Her family had from the first opposed themselves to the match on the ground of social disparity. For even in mercantile Frankfort rank was strongly marked; and the Goethes, though respectable people, were beneath the Schönmanns in the social scale. Goethe's genius went for nothing with Madam Schönmann; she

wanted for her daughter an aristocratic husband, not a literary one, — one who had wealth in possession, and not merely, as Goethe had, in prospect. How far Lili was influenced by her mother's and brothers' representations it is impossible to say; however, she showed herself capricious, was sometimes cold, or seemed so to him, while favoring the advances of others. Goethe was convinced that she did not entertain for him that devoted love, without which he felt that their union could not be a happy one. They separated; but on her death-bed she confessed to a friend that all she was, intellectually and morally, she owed to him.

In 1775 our poet was invited by the young duke of Saxe-Weimar, Karl August, — whose acquaintance he had made at Frankfort and at Mentz, his junior by two or three years, — to establish himself in civil service at the Grand-Ducal Court. The father, who had other views for his son, and was not much inclined to trust in princes, objected; many wondered, some blamed. Goethe himself appears to have wavered with painful indecision, and at last to have followed a mysterious impulse rather than a clear conviction or deliberate choice. His Heidelberg friend and hostess sought still to detain him, when the last express from Weimar drove up to the door. To her he replied in the words of his own Egmont: —

“Say no more! Goaded by invisible spirits, the sun-steeds of time run away with the light chariot of our destiny; there is nothing for it but to keep our courage, hold tight the reins, and guide the wheels now right, now left, avoiding a stone here, a fall there. Whither away? Who knows? Scarcely one remembers whence he came.”

It does not appear that he ever repented this most decisive step of his life-journey, nor does there appear to

have been any reason why he should. A position, an office of some kind, he needs must have. Even now, the life of a writer by profession, with no function but that of literary composition, is seldom a prosperous one; in Goethe's day, when literature was far less remunerative than it is in ours, it was seldom practicable. Unless he had chosen to be maintained by his father, some employment besides that of book-making was an imperative necessity. The alternative of that which was offered — the one his father would have chosen — was that of a plodding jurist in a country where forensic pleading was unknown, and where the lawyer's profession offered no scope for any of the higher talents with which Goethe was endowed. On the whole, it was a happy chance that called him to the little capital of the little Grand-Duchy of Saxe-Weimar. If the State was one of petty dimensions (a kind of pocket-kingdom, like so many of the principalities of Germany), it nevertheless included some of the fairest localities, and one at least of the most memorable in Europe, — the Wartburg, where Luther translated the Bible, where Saint Elizabeth dispensed the blessings of her life, where the Minnesingers are said to have held their poetic tournament, —

“ Heinrich von Ofterdingen,  
Wolfram von Eschenbach.”

It included also the University of Jena, which at that time numbered some of the foremost men of Germany among its professors. It was a miniature State, and a miniature town; one wonders that Goethe, who would have shone the foremost star in Berlin or Vienna, could content himself with so narrow a field. But Vienna and Berlin did not call him until it was too late, — until patronage was needless; and Weimar did. A miniature



State, — but so much the greater his power and freedom and the opportunity of beneficent action.

No prince was ever more concerned to promote in every way the welfare of his subjects than Karl August; and in all his works undertaken for this purpose, Goethe was his foremost counsellor and aid. The most important were either suggested by him or executed under his direction. Had he never written a poem, or given to the world a single literary composition, he would still have led, as a Weimar official, a useful and beneficent life. But the knowledge of the world and of business, the social and other experience gained in this way, was precisely the training which he needed — and which every poet needs — for the broadening and deepening and perfection of his art. Friedrich von Müller, in his valuable treatise of “Goethe as a Man of Affairs,” tells us how he traversed every portion of the country to learn what advantage might be taken of topographical peculiarities, what provision made for local necessities. “Everywhere — on hilltops crowned with primeval forests, in the depths of gorges and shafts — Nature met her favorite with friendly advances, and revealed to him many a desired secret.” Whatever was privately gained in this way was applied to public uses. He endeavored to infuse new life into the mining business, and to make himself familiar with all its technical requirements. For that end he revived his chemical experiments. New roads were built, hydraulic operations were conducted on more scientific principles, fertile meadows were won from the river Saale by systematic drainage, and in many a struggle with Nature an intelligently persistent will obtained the victory.

Nor was it with material obstacles only that the



poet-minister had to contend. In the exercise of the powers intrusted to him he often encountered the fierce opposition of party interest and stubborn prejudice, and was sometimes driven to heroic and despotic measures in order to accomplish a desired result, — as when he foiled the machinations of the Jena professors in his determination to save the University library, and when, in spite of the opposition of the leading burghers, he demolished the city wall.

In 1786 Goethe was enabled to realize his cherished dream of a journey to Italy. There he spent a year and a half in the diligent study and admiring enjoyment of the treasures of art which made that country then, even more than now, the mark and desire of the civilized world. He came back an altered man. Intellectually and morally he had made in that brief space, under new influences, a prodigious stride. His sudden advance while they had remained stationary separated him from his contemporaries. The old associations of the Weimar world, which still revolved its little round, the much-enlightened traveller had outgrown. People thought him cold and reserved. It was only that the gay, impulsive youth had ripened into an earnest, sedate man. He found Germany jubilant over Schiller's "Robbers" and other writings representative of the "storm-and stress" school, which his maturity had left far behind, his own contributions to which he had come to hate. Schiller, who first made his acquaintance at this time, writes to Körner: —

"I doubt that we shall ever become intimate. Much that to me is still of great interest he has already outlived. He is so far beyond me, not so much in years as in experience and culture, that we can never come together in one course."

How greatly Schiller erred in the supposition that they never could become intimate, how close the intimacy which grew up between them, what harmony of sentiment, how friendly and mutually helpful their co-operation, is sufficiently notorious.

But such was the first aspect which Goethe presented to strangers at this period of his life; he rather repelled than attracted, until nearer acquaintance learned rightly to interpret the man, and intellectual or moral affinity bridged the chasm which seemed to divide him from his kind. In part, too, the distance and reserve of which people complained was a necessary measure of self-defence against the disturbing importunities of social life. "From Rome," says Friedrich von Müller, "from the midst of the richest and grandest life, dates the stern maxim of 'Renunciation' which governed his subsequent being and doing, and which furnished his only guarantee of mental equipoise and peace."

His literary works hitherto had been spasmodic and lawless effusions, the escapes of a gushing, turbulent youth. In Rome he had learned the sacred significance of art. The consciousness of his true vocation had been awakened in him; and to that, on the eve of his fortieth year, he thenceforth solemnly devoted the remainder of his life. He obtained release from the more onerous of his official engagements, retaining only such functions as accorded with his proper calling as a man of letters and of science. He renounced his daily intercourse with Frau von Stein, though still retaining and manifesting his unabated friendship for the woman to whom in former years he had devoted so large a portion of his time, and employed himself in giving forth those immortal words which have settled forever his place

among the stars of first magnitude in the intellectual world.

Noticeable and often noted was the charm and (when arrived to maturity) the grand effect of his personal presence. Physical beauty is not the stated accompaniment, nor even the presumable adjunct, of intellectual greatness. In Goethe, as perhaps in no other, the two were combined. A wondrous presence!—on this point the voices are one and the witnesses many. “Goethe was with us,” so writes Heinse to one of his friends; “a beautiful youth of twenty-five, full of genius and force from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot; a heart full of feeling, a spirit full of fire, who with eagle wings *ruit immensus ore profundo*.” Jacobi writes: “The more I think of it, the more impossible it seems to me to communicate to any one who has not seen Goethe any conception of this extraordinary creature of God.” Lavater says: “Unspeakably sweet, an indescribable appearance, the most terrible and lovable of men.” Hufeland, the chief medical celebrity of Germany, describes his appearance in early manhood: “Never shall I forget the impression which he made as ‘Orestes’ in Greek costume. You thought you beheld an Apollo. Never was seen in any man such union of physical and spiritual perfection and beauty as at that time in Goethe.” More remarkable still is the testimony of Wieland, who had reason to be offended, having been before their acquaintance the subject of Goethe’s sharp satire. But immediately at their first meeting, sitting at table “by the side,” he says, “of this glorious youth, I was radically cured of all my vexation . . . . Since this morning,” he wrote to Jacobi, “my soul is as full of Goethe as a dew-drop is of the morning sun.” And to



Zimmermann : "He is in every respect the greatest, best, most splendid human being that ever God created." Goethe was then twenty-six. Henry Crabbe Robinson, who saw him at the age of fifty-two, reports him one of the most "oppressively handsome" men he had ever seen, and speaks particularly, as all who have described him speak, of his wonderfully brilliant eyes. Those eyes, we are told, had lost nothing of their lustre, nor his head its natural covering, at the age of eighty.

Among the heroic qualities notable in Goethe, I reckon his faithful and unflagging industry. Here was a man who took pains with himself, — *liess sich's sauer werden*, — and made the most of himself. He speaks of wasting, while a student in Leipsic, "the beautiful time;" and certainly neither at Leipsic nor afterward at Strasburg did he toil as his Wagner in "Faust" would have done. But he was always learning. In the lecture-room or out of it, with pen and books or gay companions, he was taking in, to give forth again in dramatic or philosophic form the world of his experience.

A frolicsome youth may leave something to regret in the way of time misspent; but Goethe the man was no dawdler, no easy-going Epicurean. On the whole, he made the most of himself, and stands before the world a notable instance of a complete life. He would do the work which was given him to do. He would not die till the second part of "Faust" was brought to its predetermined close. By sheer force of will he lived till that work was done. Smitten at four-score by the death of his son, and by deaths all around, he kept to his task. "The idea of duty alone sustains me; the spirit is willing, the flesh must." When "Faust" was finished, the strain relaxed. "My remaining days," he said, "I may



consider a free gift ; it matters little what I do now, or whether I do anything." And six months later he died.

A complete life ! A life of strenuous toil ! At home and abroad, — in Italy and Sicily, at Ilmenau and Carlsbad, as in his study at Weimar, — with eye or pen or speech, he was always at work. A man of rigid habits ; no lolling or lounging. " He showed me," says Ecker-mann, " an elegant easy chair which he had bought to-day at anction. ' But,' said he, ' I shall never or rarely use it ; all indolent habits are against my nature. You see in my chamber no sofa ; I sit always in my old wooden chair, and never, till a few weeks ago, have permitted even a leaning place for my head to be added. If surrounded by tasteful furniture my thoughts are arrested ; I am placed in an agreeable but passive state. Unless we are accustomed to them from early youth, splendid chambers and elegant furniture had better be left to people without thoughts.' " This in his eighty-second year !

A widely-diffused prejudice regarding the personal character of Goethe refuses to credit him with any moral worth accordant with his bodily and mental gifts. It figures him a libertine, — heartless, loveless, bad. I do not envy the mental condition of those who can rest in the belief that a really great poet can be a bad man. Be assured that the fruits of genius have never grown, and will never grow, in such a soil. Of all great poets Byron might seem at first glance to constitute an exception to this — I venture to call it — law of Nature. Yet hear what Walter Scott, a sufficient judge, said of Byron : —

" The errors of Lord Byron arose neither from depravity of heart — for Nature had not committed the anomaly of uniting

to such extraordinary talents an imperfect moral sense — nor from feelings dead to the admiration of virtue. No man had ever a kinder heart for sympathy, or a more open hand for the relief of distress; and no mind was ever more formed for enthusiastic admiration of noble actions.”

The case of Goethe requires no appeal to general principles. It only requires that the charges against him be fairly investigated; that he be tried by documentary evidence, and by the testimony of competent witnesses. The mistake is made of confusing breaches of conventional decorum with essential depravity.

That Goethe was faulty in many ways may be freely conceded. But surely there is a wide difference between not being faultless and being definitively bad. To call a man bad, is to say that the evil in him preponderates over the good. In the case of Goethe the balance was greatly the other way. It has been said that he abused the confidence reposed in him by women; that he encouraged affection which he did not reciprocate, for artistic purposes. The charge is utterly groundless; and in the case of Bettine has been refuted by irrefragable proof. To say that he was wanting in love, heartless, cold, is ridiculously false. Yet the charge is constantly reiterated in the face of facts, — reiterated with undoubting assurance, and a certain complacency which seems to say, “Thank God! we are not as this man was.” There is a satisfaction which some people feel in *spotting* their man, — Burns drank; Coleridge took opium; Byron was a rake; Goethe was cold: by these marks we know them. The poet found it necessary, as I have said, in later years, under social pressure, for the sake of the work which was given him to do, to fortify himself with a mail of reserve. And this, indeed, con-

trasted strangely with his former *abandon*, and with the customary gush of German sentimentality. It was common then for Germans who had known each other by report, and were mutually attracted, when first they met, to fall on each other's necks and kiss and weep. Goethe, as a young man, had indulged such fervors; but in old age he had lost this effusiveness, or saw fit to restrain himself outwardly, while his kindly nature still glowed with its pristine fires. He wrote to Frau von Stein, "I may truly say that my innermost condition does not correspond to my outward behavior." Hence, the charge of coldness. Say that Mount *Ætna* is cold: do we not see the snow on its sides?

But he was unpatriotic; he occupied himself with poetry, and did not cry out while his country was in the death-throes—so it seemed—of the struggle with France! But what should he have done? What *could* he have done? What would his single arm or declamation have availed? No man more than Goethe longed for the rehabilitation of Germany. In his own way he wrought for that end; he could work effectually in no other. That enigmatical composition,—the "*Märchen*,"—according to the latest interpretation indicates how, in Goethe's view, that end was to be accomplished. To one who considers the relation of ideas to events, it will not seem extravagant when I say that to Goethe, more than to any one individual, Germany is indebted for her emancipation, independence, and present political regeneration.

It is true, his writings contain no declamations against tyrants, and no tirades in favor of liberty. He believed that oppression existed only through ignorance and blindness, and these he was all his life-long seeking to remove.



He believed that true liberty is attainable only through mental illumination, and that he was all his life-long seeking to promote.

He was no agitator, no revolutionist ; he had no faith in violent measures. Human welfare, he judged, is not to be advanced in that way ; is less dependent on forms of polity than on the life within. But if the test of patriotism is the service rendered to one's country, who more patriotic than he ? Lucky for us and the world that he persisted to serve her in his own way, and not as the agitators claimed that he should. It was clear to him then, and must be clear to us now, that he could not have been what they demanded, and at the same time have given to his country and the world what he did.

As a courtier and favorite of Fortune, it was inevitable that Goethe should have enemies. They have done what they could to blacken his name ; and to this day the shadow they have cast upon it in part remains. But of this be sure, that no selfish, loveless egoist could have had and retained such friends. The man whom the saintly Fräulein von Klettenberg chose for her friend, whom clear-sighted, stern-judging Herder declared that he loved as he did his own soul ; the man whose thoughtful kindness is celebrated by Herder's incomparable wife, whom Karl August and the Duchess Luise cherished as a brother ; the man whom children everywhere welcomed as their ready play-fellow and sure ally, of whom pious Jung Stilling lamented that admirers of Goethe's genius knew so little of the goodness of his heart,—can this have been a bad man, heartless, cold ?



## II.—GOETHE AS WRITER.

I HAVE said that to Goethe, above all writers, belongs the distinction of having excelled, not experimented merely, — that, others have also done, — but excelled in many distinct kinds. To the lyrist he added the dramatist, to the dramatist the novelist, to the novelist the mystic seer, and to all these the naturalist and scientific discoverer. The history of literature exhibits no other instance in which a great poet has supplemented his proper orbit with so wide an epicycle.

In poetry, as in science, the ground of his activity was a passionate love of Nature, which dates from his boyhood. At the age of fifteen, recovering from a sickness caused by disappointment in a boyish affair of the heart, he betook himself with his sketch-book to the woods. "In the farthest depth of the forest," he says, "I sought out a solemn spot, where ancient oaks and beeches formed a shady retreat. A slight declivity of the soil made the merit of the ancient boles more conspicuous. This space was inclosed by a thicket of bushes, between which peeped moss-covered rocks, mighty and venerable, affording a rapid fall to an affluent brook."

The sketches made of these objects at that early age could have had no artistic value, although the methodical father was careful to mount and preserve them. But what the pencil, had it been the pencil of the greatest master, could never glean from scenes like these, what art could never grasp, what words can never formulate, the heart of the boy then imbibed, assimilated, resolved in his innermost being. There awoke in him then those

mysterious feelings, those unutterable yearnings, that pensive joy in the contemplation of Nature, which leavened all his subsequent life, and the influence of which is so perceptible in his poetry, especially in his lyrics. It inspired among others the wild little poem called

“GANYMEDE.”

How in morning splendor  
Thou round me glowest,  
Spring beloved!  
How through my heart thrills  
The holy joy  
Of thy warmth eternal,  
Infinite Beauty!  
Oh, that I might clasp thee  
Within these arms!

Lo! on thy breast here  
Prone I languish,  
And thy flowers and thy grass  
Press themselves on my heart.  
‘Thou coolest the torturing  
Thirst of my bosom,  
Love-breathing morning wind,’  
Warbles the nightingale,  
Summoning me from the misty vale.  
I come, I come!  
Whither, ah! whither?

Up, upward it draws me.  
The clouds are nearing;  
Downward the clouds stoop,  
Bend to love’s yearning.  
Here! Here!  
In your embraces  
Upward.  
Embracing, embraced, up!  
Up to thy bosom,  
All-loving Father!

The first literary venture by which Goethe became widely known was "*Götz von Berlichingen*," a dramatic picture of the sixteenth century, in which the principal figure is a predatory noble of that name. A dramatic picture, but not in any true sense a play, it owed its popularity at the time partly to the truth of its portraiture, partly to its choice of a native subject and the truly German feeling which pervades it. It was a new departure in German literature, and perplexed the critics as much as it delighted the general public. It anticipated by a quarter of a century what is technically called the Romantic School.

"*Götz von Berlichingen*" was soon followed by the "*Sorrows of Werther*," one of those books which, on their first appearance have taken the world by storm, and of which Mrs. Stowe's "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" is the latest example. It is a curious circumstance that a great poet should have won his first laurels by prose composition. Sir Walter Scott eclipsed the splendor of his poems by the popularity of the *Waverley* novels. Goethe eclipsed the world-wide popularity of his "*Werther*" by the splendor of his poems.

Of one who was great in so many kinds, it may seem difficult to decide in what department he most excelled. Without undertaking to measure and compare what is incommensurable, I hold that Goethe's genius is essentially lyrical. Whatever else may be claimed for him, he is first of all, and chiefly, a singer. Deepest in his nature, the most innate of all his faculties, was the faculty of song, of rhythmical utterance. The first to manifest itself in childhood, it was still active at the age of fourscore. The lyrical portions of the second part of

“Faust,” some of which were written a short time before his death, are as spirited, the versification as easy, the rhythm as perfect, as the songs of his youth.

As a lyrist he is unsurpassed, I venture to say unequalled, if we take into view the whole wide range of his performance in this kind, — from the ballads, the best known of his smaller poems, and those light fugitive pieces, those bursts of song which came to him without effort, and with such a rush that in order to arrest and preserve them he seized, as he tells us, the first scrap of paper that came to hand and wrote upon it diagonally, if it happened so to lie on his table, lest, through the delay of selecting and placing, the inspiration should be checked and the poem evaporate, — from these to such stately compositions as the “Zueignung,” or dedication of his poems, the “Weltseele” and the “Orphic Sayings,” — in short, from poetry that writes itself, that springs spontaneously in the mind, to poetry that is written with elaborate art. There is this distinction, and it is one of the most marked in lyric verse. Compare in English poetry, by way of illustration, the snatches of song in Shakspeare’s plays with Shakspeare’s sonnets; compare Burns with Gray; compare Jean Ingelow with Browning.

Goethe’s ballads have an undying popularity; they have been translated, and most of them are familiar to English readers. Here is a translation of one of them which has never been published.

#### THE FISHER.

The water rushed, the water swelled;  
A fisher seated nigh  
Cool to the heart his angle held,  
And watched with tranquil eye.



And as he sits and watches there,  
Behold the waves divide;  
With dripping hair a maiden fair  
Uprises from the tide.

She sang to him, she spake to him:  
" With human arts, Oh, why,  
Why lurest thou my favored brood  
In daylight's glow to die?  
Ah, knewest thou how cheerily  
The little fishes fare,  
Thou 'dst dive with me beneath the sea  
And find contentment there.

" Doth not the blessed sun at noon  
His beams in ocean lave?  
Doth not the ripple-breathing moon  
Look lovelier in the wave?  
Doth not the deep-down heaven invite  
The wave-transfigured blue?  
Doth not thine own fair face delight,  
Seen through the eternal dew?"

The water rushed, the water swelled,  
It laved his naked feet;  
A longing through his bosom thrilled  
As when two lovers greet.  
She spake to him, she sang to him, —  
With him then all was o'er.  
She half compels, while half he wills,  
And straight is seen no more.

Of the lyric poems there are some which form a class by themselves, — unrhymed lyrics; and not only unrhymed but without fixed metre, the measure varying with every line. They have a nameless charm, which makes us forget our metrical traditions. In these poems the author, like Pindar, *numerus fertur lege solutis*. Such are the pieces entitled "Meine Göttin," "Gesang

der Geister über den Wassern," "Mahomet's Gesang," "Schwager Kronos," "Wanderer's Sturmlied," "Prometheus," "Ganymed," "Grenzen der Menschheit," "Das Göttliche," etc. The "Harzreise im Winter" (a journey to the Harz in the winter) was suggested by an actual journey which Goethe made on horseback from Weimar to the Harz mountains in winter. The journey had three distinct aims, which furnish the three motives of the poem. First, he wished to visit the iron mines of the Harz with a view to the resumption of work in certain old mines in the Duchy of Weimar. Secondly, he meant to visit a misanthropic youth in Clausthal, who had written to him for sympathy. And lastly, he had agreed to join a party of sportsmen from Weimar who were intending to hunt bears and wild boar, which then abounded in that locality. So much is necessary to explain the allusions in the piece.

#### HARZ-JOURNEY IN WINTER.

As soars the hawk  
On heavy morning clouds,  
With downy pinions resting,  
Intent on prey,  
Soar thou my song!  
For a God hath to each  
His path prescribed,  
Where the happy rush swift  
To the joyful goal.  
But he whose heart is  
Shrunk with misfortune,  
He vainly struggles  
Against the strong bond  
Of the iron thread,  
Which only the Fate's bitter shears  
Shall one day sever.

To awful thickets  
Press the wild game,  
And together with the sparrows  
Long since the wealthy  
Have slunk to their bogs.

'Tis easy following  
Where Fortune leads,  
Like the comfortable train  
On mended ways after  
A prince's entrance.

But who goes apart there?  
His path is lost in the bush.  
Behind him the thicket  
Closes together;  
The grass stands straight again,  
The desert devours him.  
His wounds who shall heal  
To whom balm became poison?  
Who out of love's fulness  
Drank hatred of man?  
First despised, then a despiser,  
Devouring in secret  
His own worth in  
Unsatisfied selfhood?

Is there, Father of love,  
A tone in thy psalter  
That can speak to his ear? —  
Oh, comfort his heart!  
Ope thou his clouded eye  
To the thousand springs  
That beside him in the desert  
Gush for the thirsting.

Thou who createst  
Joys in abundance  
So each one's cup runneth over,  
Bless the brothers of the chase  
On the track of their game,

In youthful wantonness  
Of frolic slaughter,  
Late avengers of the mischief  
Against which vainly  
For years the peasant  
Strove with his club.

But envelop the lone one  
In thy gold clouds!  
With winter green entwine, Love,  
Till blossoms the rose again,  
The moist locks of thy poet!

With torch dimly gleaming  
Thou lightest him  
Through fords by night,  
Over ways that are fathomless,  
Through fields that are desolate;  
With the thousand-colored morning  
Laugh'st into the heart of him,  
With the biting storm  
Thou bearest him aloft.  
Winter-streams from the rock  
Rush into his psalms,  
And an altar of sweetest thanksgiving  
Is to him the dreaded mountain's  
Snow-piled summit,  
With spirit-forms crowned  
By boding nations.

Thou<sup>1</sup> standest with unexplored bosom,  
Mysteriously revealed  
Above the astonished world,  
And gazest through clouds  
On their realms and their glory,  
Which thou waterest from the veins  
Of thy brothers beside thee.

“Mahomet's Song” describes the course of a river,  
and is meant to typify the progress of a great religious

<sup>1</sup> The Brocken.



dispensation. It is a fragment that remains of the plan of a drama which Goethe meditated, having for its theme the life of Mahomet.

#### MAHOMET'S SONG.

See the rock-born spring,  
Joy-glittering  
Like a star-gleam!  
Above the clouds his  
Youth was nourished  
By kind spirits  
In the bush amid the cliffs.

Youthful, fresh,  
From the cloud he dances down, —  
Down upon the marble rocks, and thence  
Shouts back again  
Toward heaven.

Through mountain-passes  
He chases the gay pebbles,  
And with early leader-step  
Sweeps along with him  
His brother fountains.

In the valley down below  
Flowers spring beneath his step,  
And the meadow  
Lives by his breath.

But no valley's shade detains him,  
And no flowers  
That cling about his knees,  
And flatter him with eyes of love.  
Toward the plain his course he steers  
Serpentining.

Brooklets nestle  
Fondly to his side. He enters  
Now the plain in silvery splendor,

And the plain his splendor shares.  
And the rivers from the plain,  
And the torrents from the mountains  
Shout to him and clamor: " Brother!  
Brother! take thy brothers with thee, —  
With thee, to thy ancient father,  
To the everlasting ocean,  
Who with outstretched arms awaits us.  
Arms, alas! which vainly open  
To embrace his longing children,  
For the greedy sand devours us  
In the dreary waste; the sun-beams  
Suck our blood, or else a hill  
To a pool confines us. Brother!  
Take thy brothers from the plain!  
Take thy brothers from the mountains!  
Take them with thee to thy sire."

Come ye all, then!  
Now in grander volume swelling,  
All his kindred  
Proudly bear their prince aloft!  
And in rolling triumph he  
Gives names to countries; cities  
Start to life beneath his feet.  
Irrepressibly he rushes,  
Leaves the city's flaming spires;  
Domes of marble, a creation  
Of his wealth, he leaves behind.

Cedar-palaces the Atlas  
Bears upon his giant shoulders;  
Over him a thousand banners  
Rustle waving in the breeze,  
Testifying of his glory.

Thus he bears along his brothers,  
And his treasures and his children;  
Thundering joy he bears them on  
To the waiting father's heart.

In the Elegies written after his return from Italy, the author figures as a classic poet inspired by the Latin Muse. The choicest of these elegies — the “Alexis und Dora” — is not so much an imitation of the ancients as it is the manifestation of a side of the poet’s nature which he had in common with the ancients. He wrote as a Greek or Roman might write, because he felt his subject as a Greek or Roman might feel it.

“Hermann und Dorothea,” which Schiller pronounced the acme not only of Goethean but of all modern art, was written professedly as an attempt in the Homeric<sup>1</sup> style, motived by Wolf’s “Prolegomena” and Voss’s “Luise.” It is Homeric only in its circumstantiality, in the repetition of the same epithets applied to the same persons, and in the Greek realism of Goethe’s nature. The theme is very un-Homeric; it is thoroughly modern and German, —

“Germans themselves I present, to the humbler dwelling I lead  
you,

Where with Nature as guide man is natural still.”<sup>2</sup>

This exquisite poem has been translated into English hexameters with great fidelity, by Miss Ellen Frothingham.

“Iphigenie auf Tauris” handles a Greek theme, exhibits Greek characters, and was hailed on its first appearance as a genuine echo of the Greek drama. Mr. Lewes denies it that character; and certainly it is not Greek, but Christian, in sentiment. It differs from the extant drama of Euripides, who treats the same subject, in the Christian feeling which determines its *dénouement*.

<sup>1</sup> “Doch Homeride zu sein, auch noch als letzter, ist schön.”

<sup>2</sup> From the Elegy entitled “Hermann und Dorothea.”

Iphigenia, having escaped the sacrifice to which she was doomed at Aulis, by the interposition of Diana, is conveyed by the Goddess to Tauris. There, having gained the favor of Thoas, king of the country, she becomes a priestess of Diana, but continues to lament her exile. Her brother Orestes, who has slain his mother to avenge the murder of Agamemnon, and for this act is pursued by the Furies, consults the oracle at Delphos, and is bidden by Apollo, as the price of his release, to fetch his sister from Tauris. Orestes understands by this Apollo's sister Diana, whose image he is to capture and bring to Greece; he does not know that his *own* sister is still living. He proceeds to Tauris with his friend Pylades. But the custom of Tauris requires that every stranger who lands on the coast shall be sacrificed to Diana. Accordingly, the two friends are seized and brought to the temple, where Iphigenia is to prepare the sacrifice. A recognition takes place between brother and sister; and this is the most effective passage in the play of "Euripides," and one of the most pathetic in the Greek drama. The problem now is how the sacrifice may be evaded, and Iphigenia escape from Tauris with her brother and his friend. Here it is that the ancient and modern treatment of the theme diverge most widely. Euripides solves the problem by an act of fraud. Under pretence of purifying the image, which had been polluted by the touch of one guilty of kindred blood, it is carried to the sea, where the Grecian vessel waits, and secretly conveyed on board. The friends embark; Thoas pursues them, but Athena appears and announces the will of the Gods that they should be suffered to depart in peace. To Goethe, whose aim was to represent Iphigenia a model of feminine dignity, as the saint by



whose virtue the guilt resting on the house of Atreus is atoned, fraud seemed inconsistent with such a character. He solves the problem partly by a different interpretation of the oracle which occurs to Orestes, — namely, that by the sister whom he was to bring away was meant not Apollo's but his *own* sister; and partly by the moral influence which Iphigenia exerts over Thoas, who, moved by her persuasion, consents to their departure.

Look on us, King! an opportunity  
For such a noble deed not oft occurs.  
Refuse, thou canst not; give thy quick consent.

THOAS.

Then go!

IPHIGENIA.

Not so, my King! I cannot part  
Without thy blessing, or in anger from thee.  
Banish us not! the sacred right of guests  
Still let us claim: so not eternally  
Shall we be severed. Honored and beloved  
As mine own father was art thou by me;  
And this impression in my soul remains.  
Should even the meanest peasant of thy land  
Bring to my ear the tones I heard from thee,  
Or should I on the humblest see thy garb,  
I will with joy receive him as a guest,  
Prepare myself his couch, beside our hearth  
Invite him to a seat, and only ask  
Touching thy fate and thee. Oh, may the Gods  
To thee the merited reward impart  
Of all thy kindness and benignity!  
Farewell! Oh, do not turn away, but give  
One kindly word of parting in return!  
So shall the wind more gently swell our sails,  
And from our eyes with softened anguish flow  
The tears of separation. Fare thee well!

And graciously extend to me thy hand  
In pledge of ancient friendship.

THOAS (*giving his hand*).

Fare thee well!<sup>1</sup>

The song of the "Fates," which Iphigenia recites, is familiar to many through Dr. Frothingham's felicitous version; but I cannot deny myself the pleasure of presenting it for the benefit of any who may not have met with it.

SONG OF THE PARCAE.

- " The Gods be your terror,  
Ye children of men!  
They hold the dominion  
In hands everlasting,  
And they can exert it  
As pleaseth them best.
- " Let him fear them doubly  
Whome'er they 've exalted!  
On crags and on cloud-piles  
The couches are planted  
Around the gold tables.
- " Dissension arises, —  
Then tumble the feasters,  
Reviled and dishonored,  
In gulfs of deep midnight,  
And wait ever vainly,  
In fetters of darkness,  
For judgment that 's just.
- " But they remain seated,  
At feasts never-failing,  
Around the gold tables.  
They stride at a footstep  
From mountain to mountain;

<sup>1</sup> Swanwick's version.

Through jaws of abysses  
Steams toward them the breathing  
Of suffocate Titans,  
Like offerings of incense,  
A light-rising vapor.

“ They turn — the proud masters —  
From whole generations  
The eye of their blessing,  
Nor will in the children  
The once well-beloved  
Still eloquent features  
Of ancestor see.”

So sang the dark Sisters:  
The old exile heareth  
That terrible music  
In caverns of darkness,—  
Remembereth his children,  
And shaketh his head.

A large portion of Goethe's productions have taken the dramatic form ; yet he cannot be said, theatrically speaking, to have been, like Schiller, a successful dramatist. His plays, with the exception of “ Egmont ” and the First Part of “ Faust,” have not commanded the stage ; they form no part, I believe, of the stock of any German theatre. The characterizations are striking, but the positions are not dramatic. Single scenes in some of them are exceptions, — like that in “ Egmont,” where Clara endeavors to rouse her fellow-citizens to the rescue of the Count while Brackenburg seeks to restrain her, and several of the scenes in the First Part of “ Faust.” But, on the whole, the interest of Goethe's dramas is psychological rather than scenic. Especially is this the case with “ Tasso,” one of the author's noblest works, where the characters are not so much actors as meta-

physical portraitures. Schiller, in his plays, had always the stage in view. Goethe, on the contrary, wrote for readers, or cultivated reflective hearers, not spectators. In the Prelude on the stage, in "Faust," he may be supposed to express his own views in the sentiments which he puts into the mouth of the poet : —

" Speak not to me of yonder motley masses,  
Whom but to see puts out the fire of song.  
Hide from my view the surging crowd that passes,  
And in its whirlpool forces us along." <sup>1</sup>

The manager says : —

" But the great point is action ; every one  
Comes as spectator, and the show's the fun.  
Let but the plot be spun off fast and thickly,  
So that the crowd shall gape in broad surprise,  
Then you have made a wide impression quickly,  
And you 're the man they'll idolize." <sup>2</sup>

To which the poet replies : —

" You do not feel how mean a trade like that must be,  
In the true artist's eyes how false and hollow !  
Our genteel botchers well I see  
Have given the maxims that you follow." <sup>2</sup>

When I say, then, that Goethe, compared with Schiller, failed of dramatic success, I mean that his talent did not lie in the line of plays adapted to the stage as it is ; or if the talent was not wanting, his taste did not incline to such performance. He was no play-wright.

But there is another and higher sense of the word *dramatic*, where Goethe is supreme,—the sense in which Dante's great poem is called *Commedia*, a play. There is a drama whose scope is beyond the compass of any

<sup>1</sup> Taylor's version.

<sup>2</sup> Brooks's version.



earthly stage, — a drama not for theatre-goers, to be seen on the boards, but for intellectual contemplation of men and angels. Such a drama is “Faust,” of which I shall speak hereafter.

Of Goethe’s prose works, — I mean works of prose fiction, — the most considerable are two philosophical novels, “Wilhelm Meister” and the “Elective Affinities.”

In the first of these the various and complex motives which have shaped the composition may be comprehended in the one word *education*, — the education of life for the business of life. The main thread of the narrative traces through a labyrinth of loosely connected scenes and events the growth of the hero’s character, — a progressive training by various influences, passionate, intellectual, social, moral, and religious. These are represented by the *personnel* of the story. In accordance with this design, the hero himself, if so he may be called, has no pronounced traits, is more negative than positive, but is brought into contact with many very positive characters. His life is the stage on which these characters perform. A ground is thus provided for the numerous portraits of which the author’s large experience furnished the originals, and for lessons of practical wisdom derived from his close observation of men and things and his life-long reflection thereon.

“Wilhelm Meister,” if not the most artistic, is the most instructive, and in that view, next to “Faust,” the most important, of Goethe’s works. In it he has embodied his philosophy of life, — a philosophy far enough removed from the epicurean views which ignorance has ascribed to him, — a philosophy which is best described by the term *ascetic*. Its key-note is Renunciation.

“With renunciation begins the true life,” was the author’s favorite maxim; and the second part of “*Wilhelm Meister*” — the *Wanderjahre* — bears the collateral title, *Die Entsagenden*; that is, the “Renouncing” or the “Self-denying.” The characters that figure in this second part — most of whom have had their training in the first — form a society whose principle of union is self-renunciation and a life of beneficent activity. Unfortunately, the *Wanderjahre* is an unfinished work, — a collection of materials, of disconnected essays and stories, which the author in his old age was too much occupied with other matters to fuse into one whole.

In the first part — in the *Lehrjahre* — we have a very striking history of religious experience under the title, “Confessions of a Beautiful Soul,” suggested by Goethe’s reminiscences of *Fräulein von Klettenberg*, — a deeply religious woman, a friend of his youth, to whom he owed his sharpest and most enduring impressions of the seriousness of life. The “Confessions” are interesting not only to the thoughtful and sympathetic reader as the genuine reflex of a pious Christian soul, but to all students of Goethe as attesting his thorough appreciation and reverent love of the saintly character there portrayed. He had not shared — he could not share — her experience, but he could prize it at its true worth. He desired to comprehend and loved to contemplate it, as he did all good and beautiful things. At the same time, the character and conversation of the wise Uncle, whom the writer of the “Confessions” introduces into her story, are evidently designed by Goethe, who could tolerate no one-sidedness, to indicate the practical limitation of religious enthusiasm and its true place in the whole of life.

The most fascinating character in "Wilhelm Meister" — the wonder and delight of the reader — is Mignon, the child-woman, — a pure creation of Goethe's genius, without a prototype in literature. Readers of Scott will remember Fenella, the elfish maiden in "Peveril of the Peak." Scott says, in his Preface to that novel: "The character of Fenella, which from its peculiarity made a favorable impression on the public, was far from being original. The fine sketch of Mignon in Wilhelm Meister's *Lehrjahre*, — a celebrated work from the pen of Goethe, — gave the idea of such a being. But the copy will be found to be greatly different from my great prototype; nor can I be accused of borrowing anything save the general idea."

As I remember Fenella, the resemblance to Mignon is merely superficial. A certain weirdness is all they have in common. The intensity of the inner life, the unspeakable longing, the cry of the unsatisfied heart, the devout aspiration, the presentiment of the heavenly life which characterize Mignon are peculiar to her; they constitute her individuality. Wilhelm has found her a kidnapped child attached to a strolling circus company, and has rescued her from the cruel hands of the manager. Thenceforth she clings to him with a passionate devotion, in which gratitude for her deliverance, filial affection, and the love of a maiden for her hero are strangely blended. Afflicted with a disease of the heart, she is subject to terrible convulsions, which increase the tenderness of her protector for the doomed child. After one of these attacks, in which she had been suffering frightful pain, we read: —

"He held her fast. She wept; and no tongue can express the force of those tears. Her long hair had become unfastened

and hung loose over her shoulders. Her whole being seemed to be melting away. . . . At last she raised herself up. A mild cheerfulness gleamed from her face. 'My father,' she cried, 'you will not leave me! you will be my father! I will be your child.' Softly, before the door, a harp began to sound. The old Harper was bringing his heartiest songs as an evening sacrifice to his friend."

Then bursts on the reader that world-famed song, — in which the soul of Mignon, with its unconquerable yearnings, is forever embalmed, — "Kennst du das Land": —

"Know'st thou the land that bears the citron's bloom?  
The golden orange glows 'mid verdant gloom,  
A gentle wind from heaven's deep azure blows,  
The myrtle low, and high the laurel grows, —  
Know'st thou the land? <sup>1</sup>

Oh, there! oh, there!

Would I with thee, my best beloved, repair.

"Know'st thou the house, the column's stately line?  
The hall is splendid, and the chambers shine,  
And marble statues stand and gaze on me;  
Alas! poor child, what have they done to thee?  
Know'st thou the house? <sup>1</sup>

Oh, there! oh, there!

Would I with thee, my guardian, repair.

"Know'st thou the mountain with its cloudy slopes?  
The mule his way through mist and darkness gropes;  
In caverns dwells the dragon's ancient brood,  
Tumbles the rock, and over it the flood, —  
Know'st thou the mountain? <sup>1</sup>

There! oh, there!

Our pathway lies; oh, father, let us fare!"

<sup>1</sup> Literally, "know'st thou it well?" But the word "well," in this case, does not answer to the German *wohl*.



The "Elective Affinities" has been strangely misinterpreted as having an immoral tendency, as encouraging conjugal infidelity, and approving "free love." That any one who has read the work with attention to the end could so misjudge it, seems incredible. Precisely the reverse of this, its aim is to enforce the sanctity of the nuptial bond by showing the tragic consequences resulting from its violation, though only in thought and feeling. Edward, the hero, is meditating a divorce from his wife, with a view to a union with Ottilie, her niece, who has attracted him, and who unreflectingly has suffered herself to be attracted by him. The death of an infant, of which she is the accidental cause, awakens in her the consciousness of her position, — of the precipice on which she stands; and remorse for having reciprocated Edward's affection causes her own death. Edward, too weak to rouse himself, dies from grief for her loss. The characters are drawn with consummate skill; that of Ottilie, in particular, is one of the sweetest and most touching pictures in all the range of modern fiction. It is in reference to her that Margaret Fuller says: "Not even in Shakspeare have I felt more strongly the organizing power of genius." And again: "The virgin Ottilie, who immolates herself to avoid spotting her thoughts with passion, gives to that much-abused book, '*Die Wahlverwandtschaften*,' the pathetic moral of the pictures of the Magdalen."

Here, a word concerning one merit of Goethe which seems to me not to have been sufficiently appreciated by even his admirers, — his loving skill in the delineation of female character; the commanding place he assigns to woman in his writings; his full recognition of the importance of feminine influence in human destiny.

The prophetic utterance, which forms the conclusion of "Faust," — "The ever womanly draws us on," — is the summing up of Goethe's own experience of life. Few men had ever such wide opportunities of acquaintance with women. If, on the one hand, his loves had revealed to him the passional side of feminine nature, he had enjoyed, on the other, the friendship of some of the purest and noblest of womankind. Conspicuous among these are Fräulein von Klettenberg and the Duchess Luise, whom no one, says Lewes, ever speaks of but in terms of veneration. No poet but Shakspeare, and scarcely Shakspeare, has set before the world so rich a gallery of female portraits. They range from the lowest to the highest, — from the wanton to the saint. There are drawn in firm lines, and limned in imperishable colors, Elizabeth, Adelaide, Friederike, Lotte, Marianne (in "Die Geschwister"), Clara, Margaret of Parma, Iphigenie, Leonora, Gretchen, Eugenie, Dorothea, Ottilie, Charlotte, the Baroness (in "Die Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten"), the Countess (in "Wilhelm Meister"), Philine, Aurelia, Mignon, Hersilie, Natalie, Therese, Makaria, — each bearing the stamp of her own individuality, and each confessing a master's hand. These may be considered as representing different phases of the poet's experience, — different *stadia* in his view of life. "The ever womanly draws us on." So Goethe, of all men most susceptible of feminine influence, was led by it from weakness to strength, from dissipation to concentration, from doubt to clearness, from tumult to repose, from the earthly to the heavenly.

## "FAUST."

Goethe appears to have derived his knowledge of the Faust legend partly from the work of Widmann, published in 1599,<sup>1</sup> partly from another more modern in its form which appeared in 1728, and partly from the puppet plays exhibited in Frankfort and other cities of Germany, of which that legend was then a favorite theme. He was not the only writer of that day who made use of it. Some thirty of his contemporaries had produced their "Fausts" during the interval which elapsed between the inception and publication of his great work. Oblivion overtook them all, with the exception of Lessing's, of which a few fragments are left;<sup>2</sup> the manuscript of the complete work was unaccountably lost on its way to the publisher, between Dresden and Leipsic.

The composition of "Faust," as we learn from Goethe's biography, proceeded spasmodically, with many and long interruptions between the inception and conclusion. Projected in 1769 at the age of twenty, it was not completed till the year 1831, at the age of eighty-two. The reasons for so long a delay in the case of a writer who often composed so rapidly have been widely discussed by recent critics. The true explanation, I think, is to be found in the fact of the author's removal to Weimar when only a small portion of the work had been written, when only the general conception and one or two leading ideas were present to his thought, and before the plan of the whole was matured. That change of residence, with the new interests, the official duties, the

<sup>1</sup> The earlier work of Spiess (1588) was translated into English, and furnished Marlowe with the subject matter of his "Dr. Faustus."

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix.



multiplicity of engagements attending it, made a thorough break in Goethe's literary life. Several works begun or planned were left unfinished, "Faust" among the rest. Some of these were never resumed, and the same fate would apparently have befallen "Faust" but for the urgent solicitation of friends. He took the manuscript with him to Rome, and from there he wrote in 1788 to friends at home that he was going to work upon his "Faust" again, and that he thought he had recovered the thread of the piece. For "thought" Bayard Taylor says, "felt sure;" but Goethe's language is not so decided.<sup>1</sup> The thread of an unfinished work after the lapse of fifteen years is not easily recovered; my own opinion is that Goethe never *did* recover it, and hence the long delay in the completion of the work. We know at any rate that the only addition made to it then was the scene in the witch's kitchen. That, as we learn from Eckermann, was written in the villa Borghese, the most unlikely place in the world for such a composition: in the midst of southern and classic associations this extravaganza of northern diablerie! In 1790 a fragment of the First Part was published, wanting several of the best scenes in the work as we now have it. Then again there is a long gap. Meanwhile he had become acquainted and intimate with Schiller, and at his instigation made several unsuccessful attempts to finish "Faust." Grief for Schiller's death, which occurred in 1805, caused new delay; but at last, in 1808, the First Part was published entire as we now have it, in a uniform edition of the author's works. Meanwhile a portion of the Second Part, comprising the whole of the third act, had been already composed. This was pub-

<sup>1</sup> "Ich glaube" is his expression.



lished separately in 1827, with the title, "Helena; a Classico-Romantic Phantasmagoria." With the exception of parts of the first act in 1828, nothing more of the Second Part of "Faust" appeared in print during the author's lifetime. But the octogenarian had rigorously bound himself to finish it if possible before, as he said, the great night should come "in which no man can work." Fortunately the closing scenes were already written. Slowly and painfully the work proceeded at intervals during the three remaining years, and was not completed until within seven months of his death.

Had ever a poet's masterpiece such a genesis! Birth-pangs extending over sixty years!

The history of its composition reveals itself here and there in the finished work, especially in the Second Part. The first half of the fifth act gives one the impression of an outline not filled up, indications instead of representations, a design imperfectly executed. Single passages, striking in themselves, are loosely connected; and this first half bears no proportion to the last. The fourth act is rich in suggestion, but labors in the structure. The third act, an exquisite poem in itself, is an interlude, and does not further the development of the plot. The same may be said of the classical Walpurgis Night in the second. In short, although one grand design may be supposed, in the poet's mind, to have comprehended and clinched the whole, the want of unity in the execution of the Second Part is painfully apparent to all in whose estimation the interest of single portions does not compensate for the halting of the plot. Even the First Part, with all its grandeur and its fire, its pathos and its sweetness, bears marks of interruption in its composition. A single prose scene contrasts with strange though

not unpleasant effect the metrical movement of the rest. Gaps and seams and joints and splicings are here and there apparent. The work is too great to be injured by them, but they bear witness of arrested and fitful composition. The *Walpurgisnachtstraum*, or "Oberon and Titania's Golden Wedding," is lugged in with no motive in the drama, whose action it only serves to interrupt. In old English poems the divisions are sometimes called *Fyttes* ("fits"). It has seemed to me that the term would be an apt designation of the scenes in "Faust." They were thrown off by the author as the *fit* took him.

But the effect of the long arrest, which after Goethe's removal to Weimar delayed the completion of the "Faust," is most apparent in the wide gulf which separates, as to character and style, the Second Part from the First. So great indeed is the distance between the two, that without external historical proofs of identity it would seem from internal evidence altogether improbable, in spite of the slender thread of the fable which connects them, that both poems were the work of one and the same author. And really the author was not the same. The change which had come over Goethe on his return from Italy had gone down to the very springs of his intellectual life. The fervor and the rush, the sparkle and foam of his early productions had been replaced by the stately calm and the luminous breadth of view that is born of experience. The torrent of the mountains had become the river of the plain; romantic impetuosity had changed to classic repose. He could still, by occasional efforts of the will, cast himself back into the old moods, resume the old thread, and so complete the first "Faust." But we may confidently assert that he could not, after the age of forty, have originated

the poem, any more than before his Italian tour he could have written the second "Faust," purporting to be a continuation of the first. The difference in spirit and style is enormous.

As to the question which of the two is the greater production, it is like asking which is the greater, Dante's "Commedia" or Shakspeare's "Macbeth"? They are incommensurable. As to which is the more generally interesting, no question can arise. There are thousands who enjoy and admire the First Part, to one who even reads the Second. The interest of the former is poetic and thoroughly human; the interest of the other is partly poetic, but mostly philosophic and scientific. The one bears you irresistibly on,—you forget the writer and his genius in the theme; the other draws your attention to the manner, and leaves you cold and careless of the theme. The transition from the first to the second is like the change from a hill country to a richly-cultured champaign; from the wild picturesqueness of Nature to the smooth perfection of Art. In one respect, at least, the Second Part is nowise inferior to the First,—namely, in rhythmical beauty. It abounds in metrical prodigies,—proof at once of the marvellous plasticity of the language and the technical skill of the poet, whose versification at the age of four-score exhibits all the ease and dexterity of youth, and to whom it seems to have been as natural to utter himself in verse as in prose.

The symbolical character of "Faust" is assumed by all the critics, and in part confessed by the author himself. Besides the general symbolism pervading and motivating the whole,—a symbolism of human destiny,—and



here and there a shadowing forth of the poet's private experience, there are special allusions — local, personal, enigmatic conceits — which have furnished topics of learned discussion and taxed the ingenuity of numerous commentators. We need not trouble ourselves with these subtleties. But little exegesis is needed for a right comprehension of the true and substantial import of the work.

The key to the plot is given in the Prologue in Heaven. The Devil, in the character of Mephistopheles, asks permission to tempt Faust; he boasts his ability to get entire possession of his soul and drag him down to hell. The Lord grants the permission, and prophesies the failure of the attempt : —

“Be it allowed! Draw this spirit from its Source if you can lay hold of him; bear him with you on your downward path, and stand ashamed when you are forced to confess that a good man in his dark strivings has a consciousness of the right way.”

Here we have a hint of the author's design. He does not intend that the Devil shall succeed; he does not mean to adopt the conclusion of the legend and send Faust to hell. He had the penetration to see, and he meant to show, that the notion implied in the old popular superstition of selling one's soul to the Devil — the notion that evil can obtain the entire and final possession of the soul — is a fallacy; that the soul is not man's to dispose of, and cannot be so traded away. We are the soul's, not the soul ours. Evil is self-limited; the good in man must finally prevail. So long as he strives, he is not lost; Heaven will come to the aid of his better nature. This is the doctrine, the philosophy,



of "Faust." In the First Part, stung by disappointment in his search of knowledge, by failure to lay hold of the superhuman, and urged on by his baser propensities personified in Mephistopheles, Faust abandons himself to sensual pleasure, — seduces innocence, burdens his soul with heavy guilt, and seems to be entirely given over to evil. This Part ends with Mephistopheles' imperious call, — "Her zu mir," — as if secure of his victim. Before the appearance of the Second Part, the reader was at liberty to accept that conclusion. But in the Second Part Faust gradually wakes from the intoxication of passion, outgrows the dominion of appetite, plans great and useful works, whereby Mephistopheles loses more and more his hold of him ; and after his death is baffled in his attempt to appropriate Faust's immortal part, to which the heavenly Powers assert their right.

Such is a brief outline of the fable. And this is the issue prefigured in the Prologue in Heaven. But whether this was Goethe's original plan is somewhat doubtful. The Prologue in Heaven was not written until the larger portion of the First Part had been published. It seems not unlikely that Faust's salvation was an after-thought, and that Goethe's original design was to follow the legend and consign his hero to the Devil at the end of his career. We may suppose that riper thought rejected such an ending, and occasioned the temporary arrest of the whole undertaking, until the idea of the Prologue in Heaven occurred to him as offering a way of escape from the sorry finale of the legendary "Faust," and a better treatment of the theme.

But the Prelude on the Stage proposes to traverse the entire circle of creation, and to pass "with considerate rapidity from heaven through the world to hell." This

seems to imply the intention, after all, to make hell the terminus of Faust's career. And yet the Prelude on the Stage we know to have been written after the publication of the first instalment of the play,—probably at the same time with the Prologue in Heaven. Here then is a contradiction,—the Prelude pointing downward to the Pit, as the woful consummation of the plot; the Prologue in Heaven directing to the skies. The contradiction can be solved only by supposing that the author forgot himself for the moment, and wrote in the sense of his original design.

Another discrepance has been noticed by the critics. Christian Hermann Weisse was the first to call attention to certain passages, from which it is evident that Goethe's first intention was to represent Mephistopheles as the emissary of the Earth-Spirit, whom Faust invokes in the first scene of the First Part. The Prologue in Heaven, which as I have said was an after-thought, provided another and better way of introducing this leading character; but the passages referring to the former method were suffered to remain, either from inadvertence or want of time and will to rewrite them. And so we have in the First Part of "Faust" these croppings-out of an earlier formation of the poet's mind, like the upheavals of a lower stratum of the earth's crust. It is a proof of the author's genius, that with all these irregularities the play has won for itself the suffrage of two generations, and maintains its place as the literary masterpiece of modern time.

The Prologue in Heaven was at first an offence to English readers, on account of its seeming irreverence. The earlier translators omitted it, or all that portion which follows the Song of the Angels. Anster thinks

to evade the difficulty by using the German "der Herr" instead of "the Lord." But the Prologue, as I said, suggests the motive of the piece, and foreshows the conclusion. To omit it is to prejudice the right understanding of the whole. And as to irreverence, it is not necessary to adopt Mr. Lewes' apology drawn from mediæval use in the Miracle Plays, whose representations of Deity are accompanied with familiarities of speech quite shocking to modern sentiment. The Faust legend was not a mediæval production, and the puppet-plays founded upon it are not to be classed with the old miracle-plays. Nor had these puppet-plays, any more than the legend itself, a prologue in heaven; rather, some of them, a prologue in hell. The Prologue is Goethe's own conception, suggested, as he tells us, by the Book of Job; but nothing could be farther from the poet's intention than to travesty or degrade that venerable poem. The alleged irreverence of Mephistopheles' conference with "the Lord" requires no other excuse than that Goethe's devil was bound to speak in character. He is the spirit that denies; the mocking spirit. His whole being is a mockery of the Holy; he can speak only as he is. Madame de Staël would have had him spiteful and defiant; it was Goethe's choice to make him sceptical and scoffing, — a kind of exaggerated, infernal likeness of Voltaire, of whom Goethe says that in his youth he could have strangled him for his irreverent treatment of the Bible. In reality there is no more irreverence in Mephistopheles' talk than in that of Satan in Job; what distinguishes them is the humor; so foreign to the Hebrew, so characteristic of the modern mind.

If the Prologue was suggested by the Book of Job, the Song of the Angels with which it opens has no parallel

in Job, or, so far as I know, in any other poem ancient or modern. The mixture of simplicity and majesty in these wonderful verses, which so fascinated and amazed the poet Shelley, makes the translation of them difficult beyond the ordinary difficulty of metrical version. I venture the following as approaching more nearly the tone, if not the letter, of the original than any I have yet seen. The angels speak in the inverse order of their rank.

## RAPHAEL.

The sun with brother orbs is sounding  
 Still, as of old, his rival song,  
 As on his destined journey bounding  
 With thunder-step he sweeps along.  
 The sight gives angels strength, though greater  
 Than angels' utmost thought sublime.  
 And all thy lofty works, Creator,  
 Are grand as in creation's prime!

## GABRIEL.

And fleetly, thought transcending, fleetly  
 The earth's gay pomp is spinning round,  
 And paradise alternates sweetly  
 With night terrific and profound.  
 There foams the sea, its broad wave beating  
 Against the cliff's deep rocky base,  
 And rock and sea away are fleeting  
 In everlasting spherul chase.

## MICHAEL.

And storms with rival fury heaving  
 From land to sea, from sea to land,  
 Still as they rave a chain are weaving  
 Of linkèd efficacy grand.  
 There burning desolation blazes,  
 Precursor of the thunder's way;  
 But, Lord, thy servants own with praises  
 The gentle movement of thy day.



## ALL THREE.

The sight gives angels strength, though greater  
Than angels' utmost thought sublime;  
And all thy lofty works, Creator,  
Are grand as in creation's prime!

This splendid overture is followed by the comic mock humility and mock compassion of Mephistopheles, who professes to have no command of high-sounding words, has nothing to say about suns and worlds, has only eyes for man, sees with pity how mortals torment themselves, and thinks they would be better off without that ray of heavenly light which they call reason, and of which the only use they make is to be more beastly than any beast. He compares them to grasshoppers that undertake to fly, — make a leap, and, plump! are down in the dirt.

*The Lord.* Is that all you have to say? Have you nothing but complaints to offer? Will nothing on the earth ever suit you?

*Meph.* No, Lord; I find everything there as bad as ever. I pity mankind, with their daily misery; I really have n't the heart to torment them!

*The Lord.* Knowest thou Faust?

*Meph.* The doctor?

*The Lord.* My servant.

*Meph.* Truly, he serves you after a strange fashion. The fool subsists on no earthly food or drink. The ferment of his mind drives him all abroad. He is half conscious of his madness.

“ From heaven he asks each fairest star,  
And from the earth each highest zest;  
And all that's near and all that's far  
Fails to content his stormy breast.”

The Lord replies, that though Faust at present serves him in a confused way, he (the Lord) will soon lead him into clearness. Then follows the permission to tempt Faust, and the Lord's prediction of the mortification and defeat of the tempter.

## MEPHISTOPHELES.

All right! Long time will not be needed;  
I'm not concerned about the how;  
And when at last I have succeeded,  
A hearty triumph you'll allow;  
Dust he shall eat, and in it glory,  
Like my Aunt Serpent, famed in story.

The drama opens with a passionate soliloquy of Faust, who complains that all his studies in Medicine, Philosophy, and Theology have been fruitless; they have brought him no nearer to the heart of things. What he most desires to know, they have not taught him; and what they have taught him yields no satisfaction.

“ So here I stand, alas! poor fool,  
As wise as when I entered school.”

Baffled and disconsolate, he resolves to apply himself to magic. The mystic volume of Nostradamus is before him; he turns over the leaves, dwells with admiration on the sign of the macrocosm, and finally invokes the Earth-Spirit, whose appearance at first overwhelms him with terror, but rallying himself, he cries: —

*Faust.* Shall I yield to thee, flame image? Here am I, —  
Faust, thy equal!

## SPIRIT.

In floods of life, in action's storm,  
Above, beneath,  
To and fro I am weaving,  
Now birth, now death;

A deep ever heaving,  
With change still flowing,  
With life all glowing,  
At the roaring loom of Time I ply,  
And weave the live garment of Deity.

*Faust.* Thou, who sweepst the wide world round, active Spirit, how near I feel myself to thee!

*Spirit.* Thou resemblest the spirit whom thou comprehendest, not me.

*Faust.* Not thee! Whom then? I, image of the Godhead, not even thee!

At this point he is interrupted by the entrance of his *famulus* Wagner, in whom we have the type of the dry prosaic pedant of Goethe's day. Wagner has heard loud speaking, and thinks Faust is reciting a Greek tragedy. He wishes to profit by the art, for in these days he has heard the actor may instruct the preacher. Yes, Faust says, if the preacher plays the actor, as is sometimes the case.

*Wagner.* But delivery makes the success of the orator; I feel that I am very backward in this.

*Faust.* Seek an honest gain. Be no fool with sounding bells. Intelligence and good sense need little art for their delivery; they deliver themselves.

Wagner is dismissed, and then Faust's monologue continues. The thought of his rejection by the Earth-Spirit rankles in his breast. Baffled in his hope of deliverance from the galling limitations of his lot, thrown back again on the dreary inanities of the old scholastic life, he meditates suicide as the only escape from what has become an intolerable load. He takes from his shelves a phial filled with the deadly potion, which is to bring him release, —

“ I welcome thee, thou only saving potion,  
Take thee in hand with genuine devotion.  
The sight of thee my cruel grief assuages,  
Allays the storm that in my bosom rages.  
The spirit's flood within me ebbs away,  
It draws me seaward; lulled to blissful dreaming,  
I see the mirror wave beneath me gleaming,  
New shores invite me and another day.”

He pours the liquid into an antique, curiously-carved cup, and puts it to his lips, —

“ With this last draught my ransomed soul reborn,  
Pledges its greeting to the unknown morn.”

At that moment he hears the well-known Easter music, the peal of the church-bells, and the choral song, — “Christ ist erstanden.”<sup>1</sup> His hand is arrested, his purpose halts; soothing memories of childhood's happy years, associated with those familiar strains, take possession of his soul, and win him back to life, —

“ Sound on, ye heavenly notes! your sweetness tames me;  
Tears flow at length, and earth once more reclaims me.”

The next scene, the liveliest in the play, presents the gayeties of Easter Sunday as they are still witnessed in Germany. The city pours forth its population. In the country, outside of the gates, pleasure-parties are swarming in all directions; there is singing and dancing. Faust, accompanied by Wagner, is greeted with respect by the peasants, who remember with gratitude the services rendered by his father, a physician, in which he also assisted, in the time of the pestilence. Faust dis-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.



claims any merit; and afterward, in conversation with Wagner, disparaging medical science, declares his belief that his father's medicines had destroyed more lives than the plague. "But let us not dim the blessing of the hour," he says, "with these melancholy thoughts." See how the green-embowered cottages shimmer in the glow of the setting sun, —

"He sinks, he vanishes, the day is done.

Yonder he speeds, and sheds new life forever.

Oh, had I wings to rise and follow on

Still after him with fond endeavor!

Then should I see beneath my feet

The hushed world's everlasting vesper,

Each summit tipped with fire, each valley's silence sweet,

The silver brook, the river's molten jasper;

And nought should stay my God-competing flight,

Though savage mountains now with all their ravines,

And now the ocean, with its tempered havens,

Successive greet the astonished sight.

The God at length appears as he were sinking,

But still the impulse is renewed;

I hasten on, the light eternal drinking,

The day pursuing, by the night pursued;

Above, the sky, beneath, the ocean spread.

A glorious dream! Meanwhile the sun has sped.

In vain the spirit plies her active wings

While still to earth the earth-born body clings."

Wagner, pedant and Philistine, cannot sympathize with these yearnings. "I have had my whims," he says, "but I never experienced such an impulse as that. One soon sees one's fill of woods and fields. From book to book is my delight."

The scene now reverts to Faust's study. Mephistopheles appears. Having entered in the likeness of a dog, he is compelled by Faust's conjuration to assume

the human form. When questioned as to his real nature, he replies : —

*Meph.* I am a portion of that power which always wills the bad, and always produces the good.

*Faust.* What mean you by that riddle?

*Meph.* I am the spirit who always denies. And rightly, for all that comes into being deserves only to perish. Therefore, it were better that nothing came into being. So, then, all that you call sin, destruction, — in short, evil, — is my proper element.

A colloquy ensues, at the close of which Mephistopheles wishes to depart, but is prevented by the figure of the pentagram on the door-sill. Faust refuses to remove the obstruction; he has the Devil imprisoned, and means for the present to keep him. Mephistopheles appears to acquiesce, and calls upon his spirits to entertain his jailer with a song. They put him to sleep with that wonderful composition known in German as the *Einschlüferungslied* (the “lullaby”), the peculiarity of which consists in a series of suggestions of beautiful objects, which succeed each other so rapidly that the mind, prevented from dwelling on any one of them, is hurried on from image to image as in a dream. Here is a brief extract from Brooks’s translation : —

“ Purple and blushing,  
Under the crushing  
Wine-presses gushing,  
Grape-blood o’erflowing  
Down over gleaming  
Precious stones streaming,  
Leaves the bright glowing  
Tops of the mountains,  
Leaves the red fountains,

Widening and rushing,  
Till it encloses  
Green hills all flushing,  
Laden with roses."

When the song ceases, Faust is found to have fallen into a deep sleep; then Mephistopheles, as lord of the rats and mice, summons a rat to nibble away the pentagram, and so makes his escape.

In the following scene he reappears. A contract is concluded, by which Mephistopheles engages to serve Faust, to be at his beck and call in this world, if Faust on his part will bind himself to do the same for Mephistopheles hereafter. "The hereafter," says Faust, "need not trouble me much; my joys and sorrows spring from this world: once destroy this, and I care not what happens. If ever I shall lie down satisfied; if ever you can flatter me into thinking that I am happy; if ever you can cheat me with enjoyment; if ever I shall say to the passing moment, 'Stay! thou art so fair!' — then you may lay me in fetters; then may the death-bell sound, and time for me be no more."

This scene contains the celebrated curse which Faust in his despair pronounces on the world and all its joys:

"Yet cursed be henceforth all that borrows  
A magic lure to charm the breast;  
That — prisoned in this cave of sorrows —  
Would dazzle me or lull to rest.  
Cursed, before all, the high opinion  
With which the mind itself deludes;  
Cursed be Appearance, whose dominion  
Its shows on human sense intrudes;  
Cursed all that to ambition caters  
With honor and a deathless name;  
Cursed all that as possession flatters, —

As wife and child, and goods and game.  
 Cursed when with hope of golden treasure  
 He spurs our spirits to the fight;  
 And cursed be Mammon, when for pleasure  
 He lays the tempting pillow right.  
 Cursed be the grape's entrancing potion,  
 And cursed be love's delicious thrall;  
 And cursed be hope and faith's devotion,  
 And cursed be patience more than all."

To this curse respond invisible spirits : —

" Woe! Woe!  
 Destroyed it thou hast,  
 The beautiful world,  
 With the blow of thy fist  
 To ruin hast hurled.  
 This hath a demigod shattered!  
 . . . . .  
 Sadly we the lost surrender.  
 Fairer now,  
 Earth's Son, in splendor  
 Rarer now.  
 Oh, recreate it!  
 In thine own bosom build it again! "

Then follow the scene in which Mephistopheles, disguised as Faust, mystifies the youth who comes to enter the university; the scene in which he fools and foils the roystering students in Auerbach's cellar; and the scene in the witches' kitchen, in which Faust receives the potion that renews his youth.

After that Margaret is brought upon the stage; and the rest of the play, with the exception of the "Walpurgis Night," is occupied with the loves of Faust and Margaret, and with Margaret's unhappy fate. This constitutes no part of the Faust-legend; it is an episode of Goethe's own creation. But the interest of this episode



is so intense, its pathos so overpowering, that the interpolation has become the real bearer of the drama. It is this that "Faust" first suggests and stands for with the mass of readers.

The character of Margaret is unique; its duplicate is not to be found in all the picture galleries of fiction. Shakspeare, in the wide range of his feminine *personnel*, has no portrait like this. A girl of low birth and vulgar circumstance, imbued with the ideas and habits of her class, speaking the language of that class from which she never for a moment deviates into finer phrase, takes on, through the magic handling of the poet, an ideal beauty. Externally common and prosaic in all her ways, she is yet thoroughly poetic, transfigured in our conception by her perfect love. To that love, unreasoning, unsuspecting, — to the excess of that which in itself is no fault, but beautiful and good, — her fall and ruin are due. Her story is the tragedy of her sex in all time. As Schlegel said of the "Prometheus Bound," — "It is not a single tragedy, but tragedy itself." When Mephistopheles with a sneer suggests that she is not the first who incurs the doom that befalls her, Faust, in his transport of penitent compassion, bursts forth with the reply :

"Woe ! woe ! by no human soul to be comprehended ; that more than one being has sunk into the depth of this wretchedness ; that the first did not atone for all the rest with her writhing death-agony in the sight of the Ever-pardoning !"

It is important to note, as throwing light on the author's design, that surrendered as he is to the reckless pursuit of pleasure, Faust's better nature is not utterly extinguished, but asserts itself from time to time in strong rebellion against the dominion of his baser appe-

tites. The potion administered to him in the witches' kitchen has inflamed his animal passions, and after his first encounter with Margaret he bids Mephistopheles to deliver her at once into his arms. Mephistopheles declares this to be impossible, but engages, when Margaret is absent, to conduct Faust to her chamber. While there, overcome, it would seem, by the spirit of the place, the abode of purity and innocence, he repents his purpose, upbraids himself, and vows never to return. He will not pursue the game. The box of jewels which Mephistopheles has brought as a lure he does not care to leave. Mephistopheles ridicules his scruples, and himself deposits the jewels in the girl's wardrobe.

Again, after making her acquaintance and winning her affection, he still resists the temptation to abuse the power he has over her. He seeks to escape, by leaving the city and betaking himself to the wilderness. But Mephistopheles discovers his retreat, and works on his compassion by representing how Margaret pines for him. Faust replies: "Thou monster, begone! do not speak to me of that beautiful creature. Urge not the desire for her on my already half-crazed senses." But finally, as if feeling impelled by irresistible fate, he exclaims: "Hell, thou wilt have this victim! Help, devil! what must be, let it be done quickly. Let her doom fall upon me, that we may both go to perdition together!" And at last, obliged to flee the city on account of the death of Valentine, whom he has killed in a duel, after plunging into a vortex of mad dissipation, indicated by the revels of the *Walpurgisnacht*, when he hears of the arrest of Margaret, he does not leave her to her fate, but returns to rescue her at the risk of his life.

Margaret is brought before us in a series of tableaux representing the successive stages of her life's short tragedy. We have the coy maiden, as she comes from confession, resenting the offer of the cavalier's arm. We have the young woman entrapped by her sex's love of finery, made aware of her beauty, rejoicing in her trinkets. We have her at the spinning-wheel, now pierced by the fatal dart.

“ Meine Ruh ist hin,  
Mein Herz ist schwer,  
Ich finde sie nimmer  
Und nimmer mehr.”

Then, after her fall, pouring forth her immeasurable anguish at the feet of the Mater dolorosa.

“ Ach neige  
Du Schmerzensreiche  
Dein Antlitz gnädig meiner Noth.”

Next, with the guilt of a brother's blood on her soul, we have that overpowering scene in the church, where the whispers of an accusing spirit, suggesting judgment and hell torments, alternate with the victim's sighs of agony and the words of Celano's awful hymn; and where you almost feel, as you read, the tremor from the swell of the mighty organ.

*Accusing Spirit.* How different it was, Gretchen, in those days when you came to the altar here, an innocent child, and stammered your prayers out of the little worn book, your heart half filled with childish sport and half with God. Gretchen! what have you now in your head, what misdeed in your heart? Are you praying for your mother's soul whom you caused to sleep over into the long, long pain? On your threshold whose blood? And under your heart what is it that already begins to swell and stir, distressing with its bodeful presence?”

*Gretchen.* Woe! woe! Could I only get rid of these thoughts that go over and over me and persecute me!

“ Dies irae, dies illa  
Solvat sæclum in favilla.”

*Accusing Spirit.* Wrath is on you; the trumpet sounds, the graves tremble; your heart, new created for fiery torments, starts quaking from its dusty rest.

*Gretchen.* Could I but away from here! It seems as if the organ took away my breath; the singing melts my heart within me.

“ Judex ergo cum sedebit  
Quidquid latet adparebit,  
Nil inultum remanebit.”

*Gretchen.* How close it is! The pillared walls confine me, the vaulted ceiling oppresses me. Air!

*Accusing Spirit.* Hide would you? Sin and shame cannot be hidden. Air? Light, would you? Alas, for you!

“ Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?  
Quem patronum rogaturus?  
Cum vix justus sit securus.”

And finally the scene in the prison, whose tragic intensity literature has never paralleled, and can never exceed. The lover and would-be deliverer finds his victim a raving maniac. She does not recognize him, thinks he is the executioner come before the time. In vain he kneels to her, till at last a certain tone in his voice pierces through all the layers of her imagination, and recalls the beloved. “Where is he? I heard him call Gretchen! Through all the howling and clatter of hell, through all the grim devilish mocking, I knew the sweet loving sound.” But her mind soon wanders again; she returns to her raving. He cannot persuade her to go with him. He attempts to take her by force.



*Gretchen.* Let me alone! I will not suffer any violence; do not grasp me with such murderous hands. I once did everything to oblige you.

*Faust.* The day is dawning; my love, my love!

*Gretchen.* Day? Yes, the day is coming; the last day draws nigh. It should be my wedding day. Tell no one that you have been with Gretchen already. Alas, for my bridal wreath! It is done for. We shall see each other again, but not at the dance. There is a crowd — they press; no sound is heard: the square, the streets cannot contain them. The bell tolls, the wand is broken. I am dragged to the block! Already every one feels aimed at their own necks the blade which is aimed at mine. The world lies dumb as the grave.

*Faust.* Oh, that I had never been born!

Then Mephistopheles appears to tell them there is not a moment to lose, — “Come, or I will leave you both in the lurch!” Gretchen thinks she sees the Devil rising out of the ground, and exclaims: —

“He is come for me! . . . Tribunal of God! I have resigned myself to thee. . . . Thine I am; Father, save me! Ye angels, heavenly host, encamp around me, — guard me! Henry, I fear thee!”

*Meph.* She is doomed!

*A voice from above.* Is saved!

*Meph. to Faust.* Hither to me! (*He disappears with Faust.*)

*A voice from within, dying on the ear.* Henry! Henry!

So the First Part ends. The reader is allowed to suppose — and most readers did suppose — that the author meant it should be inferred that the Devil had secured his victim, and that Faust, according to the legend, had paid the forfeit of his soul to the powers of hell.

But Faust reappears in a new poem, — the Second Part. He is there introduced sleeping, as if burying in

torpor the lusts and crimes and sorrows of his past career. Pitying spirits are about him, to heal his woes and promote his return to a better life. Ariel addresses them : —

“Ye who hover round this head in airy circle, conduct yourselves here also after the manner of noble elves! Allay the grim conflict of the heart, withdraw the fiery bitter darts of self-reproach, purge his soul of the horrors of past experience. Four are the pauses of the night; fill them out kindly, without delay. First, lay his head upon the cool pillow; then bathe him with dew from Lethe’s stream. The cramp-stiffened limbs will soon become supple, as strengthened he rests to meet the day. Fulfil the fairies’ fairest task; give him back to the holy light.”

Then follows, with exquisite melody, the choir of the elves; and then Ariel announces the coming day, which to spirit-ears comes with a thunder-crash. “Hark!” she says, “it is the storm of the Hours!” Faust awakes, and says : —

“The pulses of life beat with fresh vigor to greet the ethereal dawn! Thou, Earth, wast constant this night also, and breathest new-quicken’d at my feet. Already thou beginnest to enfold me with joy! Thou rousest and stirrest in me a mighty resolve to aspire evermore to the highest being.”

Any attempt to analyze, much more to expound, the occult meanings and mysteries of the Second Part of “Faust” would far exceed the scope of this essay. As the First Part deals with individual character and destiny, so the Second spreads before us the great wide world of public life. We have the imperial court, with its jealousies and intrigues, its gayeties, its financial embarrassments, which Mephistopheles relieves by a Mephistophelian device,—the issue of a paper currency;

we have war, we have industrial enterprise, — and in the midst of these we have two interludes; in the second act the “Classical Walpurgis Night,” which commentators interpret as symbolizing a mediation between the classic and romantic in literature and art; and for the whole of the third act we have the “Helena,” supposed to symbolize moral education through the influence of the beautiful.

By the discipline of these varied experiences Faust is led on through the hundred years of his earthly life to the supreme moment when, contemplating in imagination the benefit which must accrue to coming generations from his labors, — a free people on a free soil, — he exclaims: “Might I see that consummation, I could say to the moment, ‘Tarry, thou art so fair!’ the trace of my earthly days will endure for æons. . . . In anticipation of that exalted happiness, I already enjoy that highest moment!” Then, in accordance with his own stipulation in the compact with Mephistopheles, he sinks back and expires. The Lemures seize him and lay him in the grave. Mephistopheles claims Faust’s soul, and summons his spirits — the lean devils, with long crooked horns, and the stout devils, with short straight horns — to aid him in securing his prey. Angels come to the rescue; they scatter roses, which purify the air and charm the sleeper with dreams of paradise, singing, as they scatter, —

“Roses with tender ray,  
Incense that render aye,  
Hovering, fluttering,  
Secret life uttering,  
Leaf-winged, reposing here,  
Blossoms unclosing here,  
Hasten to bloom!

(*To Faust.*)

Spring round thee beaming  
Purple and green, —  
Paradise dreaming,  
Slumber serene! ”

But the breath of the demons blasts and wilts the falling roses ; they shrivel, and at last take fire, and fall flaming and scorching on the hellish crew until they are forced to retreat, — all but Mephistopheles, who stands his ground ; but, entranced by the beauty of the angels, he neglects his purpose, and fails to secure the immortal part of Faust, which the angels appropriate and bear aloft : —

“ This member of the upper spheres  
We rescue from the Devil,  
For whoso strives and perseveres  
May be redeemed from evil.”

The last two lines may be supposed to contain the author’s justification of Mephistopheles’ defeat and Faust’s salvation. Though a man surrender himself to evil, if there is that in him which evil cannot satisfy, an impulse by which he outgrows the gratifications of vice, extends his horizon and lifts his desires, pursues an onward course until he learns to place his aims outside of himself, and to seek satisfaction in works of public utility, — he is beyond the power of Satan ; he may be redeemed from evil.

One could wish, indeed, that more decisive marks of moral development had been exhibited in the latter stages of Faust’s career. But here comes in the Christian doctrine of Grace, which Goethe applies to the problem of man’s destiny. Faust is represented as saved by no merit of his own, but by the interest which



Heaven has in every soul in which there is the possibility of a heavenly life.

And so the new-born ascending spirit is committed by the Mater gloriosa to the tutelage of Gretchen, — “una poenitentium,” — now purified from all the stains of her earthly life, to whom is given the injunction, —

“Lift thyself up to higher spheres!  
When he divines, he ’ll follow thee.”

And the Mystic Choir chants the epilogue which embodies the moral of the play, —

“All that is perishing  
Types the ideal;  
Dream of our cherishing  
Thus becomes real.  
Superhumanly  
Here it is done;  
The ever womanly  
Draweth us on.”

## THE MÄRCHEN.

IN the summer of 1795 Goethe composed for Schiller’s new magazine, “Die Horen,” a prose poem known in German literature as *Das Märchen*, — “*The Tale* ;” as if it were the only one, or the one which more than another deserves that appellation.

It is not to be supposed that the author himself claimed this pre-eminence for his production. The definite article must be taken in connection with what precedes it in the “*Unterhaltungen Deutscher Ausgewanderten* ;” it was *that* tale which the Abbé had promised for the evening’s entertainment of the company.

Goethe gave this essay to the public as a riddle which would probably be unintelligible at the time, but which

might perhaps find an interpreter after many days, when the hints contained in it should be verified. Since its first appearance commentators have exercised their ingenuity upon it, perceiving it to be allegorical, but until recently without success. They made the mistake of looking too far and too deep for the interpretation. Carlyle, who in 1832 published a translation of it in "Fraser's Magazine," and who pronounces it "one of the notablest performances produced for the last thousand years," says: "So much however I will stake my whole money capital and literary character upon, that here is a wonderful EMBLEM OF UNIVERSAL HISTORY set forth," etc.

But Goethe was not the man to concern himself with such wide generalities. He preferred to deal with what is present and palpable, and the inferences to be deduced therefrom.

Dr. Hermann Baumgart in 1875, under the title "Goethe's Märchen, ein politisch-nationales Glaubensbekenntniss des Dichter's," wrote a commentary on "The Tale," which gives what is probably the true explanation. If it does not solve every difficulty, it solves more difficulties and throws more light on the poem than any previous interpretation had done. I follow his lead in the exposition which I now offer.

"The Tale" is a prophetic vision of the destinies of Germany,—an allegorical foreshowing at the close of the eighteenth century of what Germany was yet to become, and has in great part already become. A position is predicted for her like that which she occupied from the time of Charles the Great to the time of Charles V.,—a period during which the Holy Roman Empire of

Germany was the leading secular power in Western Europe.

That time had gone by. Since the middle of the sixteenth century Germany had declined, and at the date of this writing (1795) had nearly reached her darkest day. Disintegrated, torn by conflicting interests, pecked by petty rival princes, despairing of her own future, it seemed impossible that she should ever again become a power among the nations.

Goethe felt this ; he felt it as profoundly as any German of his day. He has been accused of want of patriotism, and incurred much censure for that alleged defect. He certainly did not manifest his patriotism by loud declamation. During the War of Liberation he made no sign. Under the reign of the Holy Alliance he did not side with the hotheads — compeers of Sand — who placed themselves in open opposition to the Government. He could not echo their cry. They were revolutionists ; he was an evolutionist. And they hated him, they maligned him, they invented all manner of scandal against him. They accused him of abusing the affections of women for literary purposes ; they even affected to depreciate his genius. Börne pronounced him a model of all that is bad. Menzel wrote : “ Mark my words : in twenty, or at the longest thirty, years he will not have an admirer left ; no one will read him.” There was nothing too bad to be said of Goethe ; he was publicly held up for reprobation and scorn. It was as much as one’s reputation was worth to speak well of him.

Goethe, I say, was charged with want of patriotism. He was no screamer ; but he felt profoundly his country’s woes, and he characteristically went into himself

and studied the situation. The result was this wonderful composition, — “Das Märchen.”

He perceived that Germany must die to be born again. She did die, and is born again. He had the sagacity to foresee the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, — an event which took place eleven years later, in 1806. The Empire is figured by the composite statue of the fourth King in the subterranean Temple, which crumbles to pieces when that Temple, representing Germany's past, emerges and stands above ground by the River. The resurrection of the Temple and its stand by the River is the *dénouement* of the Tale. And that signifies, allegorically, the rehabilitation of Germany.

The agents that are to bring about this consummation are the spread of liberal ideas, signified by the gold of the Will-o'-wisps; Literature, signified by the Serpent; Science, signified by the Old Man with the Lamp; and the Church, or Religion, signified by his wife. The Genius of Germany is figured by the beautiful Youth, the disconsolate Prince, who dies of devotion to the Fair Lily. The Lily herself represents the Ideal.

Having premised thus much, I now proceed to unfold the Tale, with accompanying comments, omitting however some of the details, and presenting only the organic moments of the fable.

In the middle of a dark night (the dark period of German history) the ferryman asleep in his hut by the side of a swollen river is awakened by the cry of parties demanding to be ferried across the stream.

Here let us pause a moment. The Hut, according to Baumgart, is the provisional State (Nothstaat), — the government for the time being. The Ferryman then is the State functionary, who regulates and controls civil



intercourse. The River represents that intercourse, — the flow of current events, — swollen by the French Revolution. Now, a river is separation and communication in one. The Rhine, which separates Germany from France, is also a medium of communication between the two. What is it then that the River in the “*Märchen*” separates and mediates? This is a difficult question. No interpretation tallies exactly with all the particulars of the allegory. The most satisfactory is that of a separation and a means of communication between State and people; between official, established tradition and popular life.

To return to the story. The Ferryman, roused from his slumbers, opens the door of the hut, and sees two Will-o'-wisps, who are impatient to be put across. These are the bearers of the new ideas, which proved so stimulating to the German mind, — giving rise to what is known in German literature as the *Aufklärung* (“enlightenment”). Why called Will-o'-wisps? They come from France, and the poet means by their flashes and vivacity, as contrasted with German gravity, to indicate their French origin. They cause the Ferryman much trouble by their activity. They shake gold into his boat (that is, talk philosophy, — the philosophy of the French Encyclopædists); he fears that some of it might fall into the stream, and then there would be mischief, — the stream would rise in terrible waves and engulf him. (The new ideas were very radical; and if allowed to circulate freely in social converse might cause a revolution.) He bids them take back their gold. “We cannot take back what we have once given forth.” (The word once spoken cannot be unspoken.)

When they reach the opposite shore the Ferryman demands his fare. They reply, that he who will not take

gold for pay must go unpaid. He demands fruits of the earth (that is, practical service), which they despise. They attempt to depart, but find it impossible to move. (Philosophy without practical ability can make no headway in real life.) He finally releases them on their promise to bring to the River three cabbages, three artichokes, and three onions.

I am not aware that there is any particular significance in the several kinds of vegetables here specified. The general meaning is, that whoever would work effectually in his time must satisfy the necessities of the time, — must pay his toll to the State with contributions of practical utility.

The Ferryman then rows down the stream, gathers up the gold that has fallen into the boat, goes ashore and buries it in an out-of-the-way place in the cleft of a rock, then rows back to his hut. Now, in the rock-cleft, into which the gold had been cast, dwelt the Green Serpent. The Serpent is supposed to represent German Literature, which until then had kept itself aloof from the world, had wandered as it were in a wilderness; but the time was now come when it was to receive new light and be quickened with new impulse. She hears the chink of the falling gold-pieces, darts upon them, and eagerly devours them. They melt in her interior, and she becomes self-luminous, — a thing that she had always been hoping for, but had never until then attained. Proud of her new lustre, she sallies forth to discover if possible whence the gold which came to her had been derived. She encounters the Will-o'-wisps, and claims relationship with them.

“Well, yes,” they allow, “you are a kind of cousin; but you are in the horizontal line, — we are vertical. See

here." They shoot up to their utmost height. "Pardon us, good lady, but what other family can boast of anything like that? No Will-o'-wisp ever sits or lies down."

The Serpent is somewhat abashed by the comparison. She knows very well that although when at rest she can lift her head pretty high, she must bend to earth again to make any progress. She inquires if they can tell her where the gold came from which dropped in the cave where she resides. They are amused at the question, and immediately shake from themselves a shower of gold pieces, which she greedily devours. "Much good may it do you, madam." In return for this service they desire to be shown the way to the abode of the Fair Lily, to whom they would pay their respects. (The Fair Lily represents Ideal Beauty.) The Serpent is sorry to inform them that the Lily dwells on the other side of the river.

"On the other side!" they exclaim, "and we let ourselves be ferried across to this side last night in the storm! But perhaps the Ferryman may be still within call, and be willing to take us back." "No," she says; "he can bring passengers from the other side to this, but is not permitted to take any one back."

The interpretation here is doubtful. It may mean that while a jealous Government is willing to assist in the deportation of questionable characters, it will have nothing to do with them on its own ground.

But besides the government ferry, there are other means of getting across. The Serpent herself, by making a bridge of her body, can take them across at high noon. (Literature, in its supreme achievements, — its meridian power, — becomes a vehicle of ideas which defies political embargo.)



But Will-o'-wisps do not travel at noonday. Another passage is possible at morning and evening twilight, by means of the shadow of the great Giant. The Giant's body is powerless, but its shadow is mighty, and when the sun is low stretches across the River.

Here all commentators seem to agree in one interpretation. Says Carlyle, "Can any mortal head, not a wigblock, doubt that the Giant of this poem is Superstition?" This is loosely expressed. Unquestionably superstition, in the way of fable or foreboding, stretches far into the unknown. But it is a *shadow*, according to "The Tale," which possesses this power. Now, to make a shadow two things are needed, — light, and a body which intercepts the light. The body in this case is popular ignorance; that is the real Giant. Superstition is that Giant's shadow, — strongest and longest, of course, when the sun is low.

Thus instructed, the Will-o'-wisps take their leave, and the Serpent returns to her cave.

Now follows the scene in the subterranean Temple, the Temple of the Four Kings, by which we are to understand historic Germany, — the Germany of old time. The Serpent has discovered this Temple, and having become luminous is able to see what it contains. There are the statues of four kings. The first is of gold, the second of silver, the third of bronze, the fourth a compound of several metals. The first king, who wears a plain mantle and no ornament but a garland of oak leaves, represents the rule of Wisdom and acknowledged worth. The second, who sits, and is highly decorated, — robe, crown, sceptre, adorned with precious stones, — represents the rule of Appearance (*Schein*), — majesty supported by prestige and tradition. The third,



also sitting, represents Government by Force. The fourth, the composite figure in a standing posture, represents the Holy Roman Empire of Germany. The Serpent has been discoursing with the Gold King, when the wall opens, and enters an old man of middle stature, in peasant's dress, carrying a lamp, with a still flame pleasing to look upon, which illumines the whole Temple without casting any shadow. This lamp possesses the strange property of changing stones into gold, wood into silver, dead animals into precious stones, and of annihilating metals. But to exercise this power it must shine alone; if another light appears beside it, it only diffuses a clear radiance, by which all living things are refreshed.

The bearer of this lamp is supposed, by Baumgart, to represent Science (*Wissenschaft*); but it seems to me that his function includes practical wisdom as well. What is signified by the marvellous properties of the lamp must be left to each reader to conjecture.

"Why do you come," asks the Gold King of the Man with the lamp, "seeing we already have light?" "You know that I cannot enlighten what is wholly dark," is the reply. (Wisdom does not concern itself with what is unsearchable,—with matters transcending human ken.) "Will my kingdom end?" asks the Silver King. "Late or never." The Brazen King asks, "When shall I arise?" The answer is, "Soon." "With whom shall I combine?" "With your elder brothers." What will the youngest do?" inquired the King. "He will sit down," replied the Man with the lamp. "I am not tired," growled the fourth king. (The Empire, even at that date, was still tenacious of its sway.)

Again the Gold King asks of the Man with the

lamp, "How many secrets knowest thou?" "Three," replied the Man. "Which is the most important?" asks the Silver King. "The open secret," the Man replies.

It sometimes happens that a truth or conviction is, as we say, "in the air," before the word which formulates it has been spoken; it is an open secret. Thus, in the closing months of 1860, "Secession" was in the air; it was our open secret.

"Wilt thou open it to us also?" asks the Brazen King. "When I know the fourth," replied the Man. "I know the fourth," said the Serpent, and whispered something in the ear of the Man with the lamp. He cried with a loud voice, "The time is at hand!" The Temple resounded, the statues rang with the cry; and immediately the Man with the lamp vanished to the west, the Serpent to the east.

Here ends the first act of this prophetic drama. The Man with the lamp returns to his cottage, where the Old Woman — his wife — greets him with loud lamentations. "Scarcely were you gone," she whimpers, "when two impetuous travellers called; they were dressed in flames, and seemed quite respectable. One might have taken them for Will-o'-wisps. But they soon began to flatter me, and made impertinent advances." "Pooh! they were only chaffing you. Considering your age, my dear, they could n't have meant anything serious." "My age, indeed! always my age! How old am I, then? But I know one thing. Just look at these walls! See the bare stones! They have licked off all the gold; and when they had done it, they dropped gold pieces about. Our dear pug swallowed some of them; and see there! the poor creature lies dead."

The Old Woman represents the Church, — the accepted traditional religion. There is a beautiful fitness in this symbolism. Science and religion, knowledge and faith, are mutually complementary in human life. The little pug may mean some pet dogma of the Church; Baumgart suggests belief in the supernatural, to which modern enlightenment (the gold of the Will-o'-wisps) proves fatal. The little pug dies; but a doctrine which perishes, which becomes obsolete as popular belief, may become historically precious as myth. This is what is meant when it is said, farther on, that the Old Man with his lamp changes the pug to an onyx. Moreover, when such myth is embraced by poetry, it acquires a new, transfigured, immortal life. Thus the gods of Greece still live, and live forever, in Homer's song. In this sense, with this aim, the Man with the lamp sends the onyx pug to the Fair Lily, whose touch causes dead things to live.

The Old Woman had incautiously promised the Will-o'-wisps (in order, we may suppose, to get rid of them) to pay their debt to the River, of three cabbages, three artichokes, and three onions. But why did they visit her cottage at all; and why so intent on the obsolete gold on its walls? The answer is, modern culture knows full well that the Church is the depositary of many precious truths which, though no longer current in the form in which they were once clothed, approve and justify themselves when restated and given to the world in a new form. So they — the New Lights — say in effect to the Church, "Old Lady, you are somewhat out of date; if you mean to keep your place and vindicate your right to be, you must throw yourself into the life of the time; you must contribute something useful to forward that



life. It is through you that the new philosophy must discharge its debt to the River" (that is, to the life of the time).

The Man with the lamp approves and seconds the commission intrusted to his wife by the Will-o'-wisps, and at dawn of day loads her with the cabbages, the artichokes, and the onions destined for the River, to which he adds the onyx as a present to the Fair Lily. The first part of her mission is a failure. On her way to the ferry she encounters the Shadow of the blundering Giant stretching across the plain. The Shadow unceremoniously puts its black fingers into her basket, takes out three vegetables, — one of each kind, — and thrusts them into the mouth of the Giant, who greedily devours them. (Some freak of popular ignorance intercepts and impairs the practical benefit which the new culture, through the Church, had hoped to confer on the age.)

The Ferryman refuses to accept the imperfect offering as full satisfaction of the Will-o'-wisps' debt, and only consents at last to receive it provisionally, if the Old Woman will swear to make the number good within twenty-four hours. She is required to dip her hand in the stream and take the oath. She dips and swears. But when she withdraws her hand, behold! it has turned black; and, what is worse, has grown smaller, and seems likely to disappear altogether. (The apparent dignity of the Church is impaired by contact with vulgar life.)

"Oh, woe!" she cries. "My beautiful hand, which I have taken so much pains with and have always kept so nice! What will become of me?" The Ferryman tries to comfort her with the assurance that although the hand might become invisible, she would be able to use



it all the same. "But," says she, "I would rather not be able to use it than not have it seen." (Here is a stroke of satire on the part of the poet, implying that the Church cares more for the show of authority than for the substance.)

Sad and sullen the Old Woman takes up her basket and bends her steps toward the abode of the Fair Lily. On the way she overtakes a pilgrim more disconsolate than herself, — a beautiful youth, with noble features, abundant brown locks, his breast covered with glittering mail, a purple cloak depending from his shoulders. His naked feet paced the hot sand ; profound grief appeared to render him insensible to external impressions. The Old Woman endeavors to open a conversation with him, but receives no encouragement. She desists with the apology, "You walk too slow for me, sir. I must hurry on, for I have to cross the River on the Green Serpent, that I may take this present from my husband to the Fair Lily." "You are going to the Fair Lily?" he cried ; "then our roads are the same. But what is this present you are bringing her?" She showed him the onyx pug. "Happy beast!" he exclaimed ; "thou wilt be touched by her hands, thou wilt be made alive by her ; whereas the living are forced to stand aloof from her lest they experience a mournful doom. Look at me," he continued, "how sad my condition ! This mail which I have worn with honor in war, this purple which I have sought to merit by wise conduct, are all that is left me by fate, — the one a useless burden, the other an unmeaning decoration. Crown, sceptre, and sword are gone ; I am in all other respects as naked and needy as any son of earth. So unblest is the influence of her beautiful blue eyes ! they deprive all living beings of

their strength, and those who are not killed by the touch of her hand find themselves turned into walking shadows."

This is finely conceived. The Youth, the Prince who has lost sceptre and sword, represents the Genius of Germany, once so stalwart and capable in action, now (at the time of Goethe's writing) enervated and become a melancholy dreamer from excessive devotion to the Lily, that is, excessive Idealism ; whereby

"Enterprises of great pith and moment  
 . . . . . their currents turn awry,  
 And lose the name of action."

Such was Germany in those days. And even later, Freiligrath compared her to Hamlet, in whom

"The native hue of resolution  
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."

The travellers cross the bridge which the Serpent makes for them. The Serpent herself straightens out her bow and accompanies them. On the way the Will-o'-wisp, invisible in broad day, are heard whispering a request to the Serpent that she would introduce them to the Lily in the evening, as soon as they should be any way presentable. The Lily receives her visitors graciously, but with an air of deep dejection. She imparts to the Old Woman her recent affliction. While her pet canary-bird was warbling its morning hymn, a Hawk appeared in the air and threatened to pounce upon it. The frightened creature sought refuge in its mistress's bosom, and, like all living things, was killed by her touch. (The Hawk represents the newly awakened, impatient spirit of German Patriotism, which scared into silence the lighter lyrics of the time.)

The Old Woman presents the onyx pug, and the Lily is delighted with the gift. Her touch gives it life. She plays with it, caresses it. The melancholy youth who stands by and looks on is maddened with jealousy at the sight. "Must a nasty little beast be so fondled, and receive her kiss on its black snout, while I, her adorer, am kept at a distance?" At last he can bear it no longer, and resolves to perish in her arms. He rushes towards her; she, knowing the consequence, instinctively puts out her arms to ward him off, and thereby hastens the catastrophe. The youth falls lifeless at her feet.

Here ends the second act. The Genius of Germany is apparently extinct. Can it be revived? The third and final act foreshows its revival, — the political rehabilitation of Germany. I am compelled by want of space to omit, in what follows, many of the accessories, — such as the female attendants of the Lily, the mirror, the last desperate freaks of the Giant, etc., — and to keep myself to the main thread of the story.

The first object now, on the part of those interested, is to prevent corruption, which would make resuscitation impossible. So the Serpent forms with her body a cordon around the lifeless form of the Youth to protect it. "Who will fetch the Man with the lamp?" she cries, fearing every moment that the sun will set and dissolution penetrate the magic circle, causing the body of the Youth to fall in pieces. At length she espies the Hawk in the air, and hails the auspicious omen. (Patriotism still lives.)

Shortly after, the Man with the lamp appears. "Whether I can help," he says, "I know not. The individual by himself cannot do much, but only he who

at the proper moment combines with many." (All who have their country's salvation at heart must join their forces in time of need.)

Night comes on. The Old Man glances at the stars and says, "We are here at the propitious hour; let each do his duty and perform his part." The Serpent then began to stir; she loosened her enfolding circle, and slid in large volumes toward the River. The Will-o'-wisps followed. The Old Man and his Wife seized the basket, lifted into it the body of the Youth, and laid the Canary-bird upon his breast. The basket rose of itself into the air, and hovered over the Old Woman's head. She followed the Will-o'-wisps. The Fair Lily with the pug in her arms followed the Woman, and the Man with the lamp closed the procession. The Serpent bridged the River for them, and then drew her circle again around the basket containing the body of the Youth. The Old Man stoops down to her and asks, "What are you going to do?" "Sacrifice myself," she answers, "rather than be sacrificed." The Man bids the Lily touch the Serpent with one hand and the body of the Youth with the other. She does so, and behold! the Youth comes to life again, but not to full consciousness. Then the Serpent bursts asunder. Her form breaks into thousands upon thousands of glittering jewels. These the Man with the lamp gathers up and casts into the stream, where they afterward form a solid and permanent bridge.

The Old Man now leads the party to the cave. They stand before the Temple barred with golden lock and bolt. The Will-o'-wisps at the bidding of the Old Man melt bolt and lock with their flames, and the company are in the presence of the Four Kings. "Whence come



ye?" asks the Gold King. "From the world," is the reply. "Whither go ye?" asked the Silver King. "Into the world." "What would ye with us?" asked the Brazen King. "Accompany you," said the Old Man. "Who will govern the world?" asked the Composite King. "He who stands on his feet," is the answer. "That am I," said the King. "We shall see," said the Old Man, "for the time is come."

Then the ground beneath them began to tremble; the Temple was in motion. For a few moments a fine shower seemed to drizzle from above. "We are now beneath the River," said the Old Man. The Temple mounts upward. Suddenly a crash is heard; planks and beams come through the opening of the dome. It is the old Ferryman's hut, which the Temple in its ascent had detached from the ground. It descends and covers the Old Man and the Youth. The women, who find themselves excluded, beat against the door of the Hut, which is locked. After a while the door and walls begin to ring with a metallic sound. The flame of the Old Man's lamp has converted the wood into silver. The very form has changed; the Hut has become a smaller temple, or, if you will, a shrine, within the larger.

Observe the significance of this feature of "The Tale." The Hut, as was said, represents the existing Government. New Germany is not to be the outcome of a violent revolution forcibly abolishing the old, but a natural growth receiving the old into itself, assimilating and embodying it in a new constitution.

When the Youth came forth from the transformed Hut, it was in company with a man clad in a white robe, bearing a silver oar in his hand. This was the old Ferryman, now to become a functionary in the new State.

As soon as the rising sun illumined the cupola of the Temple, the Old Man, standing between the Youth and the Maiden (the Lily), said with a loud voice, "There are three that reign on earth, — Wisdom, Show, Force." When the first was named, up rose the Gold King; with the second, the Silver. The Brazen King was rising slowly at the sound of the third, when the Composite King (the Holy Roman Empire) suddenly collapsed into a shapeless heap. The Man with the lamp now led the still half-conscious Youth to the Brazen King, at whose feet lay a sword. The Youth girded himself with it. "The sword on the left," said the mighty king, "the right hand free." They then went to the Silver King, who gave the Youth his sceptre, saying, "Feed the sheep." They came to the Gold King, who, with a look that conveyed a paternal blessing, crowned the Youth's head with a garland of oak leaves, and said, "Acknowledge the Highest."

The Youth now awoke to full consciousness; his eyes shone with an unutterable spirit, and his first word was, "Lily!" He clasped the fair maiden, whose cheeks glowed with an inextinguishable red, and, turning to the Old Man, said, with a glance at the three sacred figures, "Glorious and safe is the kingdom of our fathers; but you forgot the fourth power, that which earliest, most universal, and surest of all rules the world, — the power of Love." "Love," said the Old Man, smiling, "does not rule, but educates; and that is better."

And so the Temple stands by the River. The Old Woman, having at the bidding of her husband bathed in its waves, comes forth rejuvenated and beautified. The Old Man himself looks younger. Husband and wife (Science and Religion) renew their nuptial vows, and pledge their troth for indefinite time.

The prophecy is accomplished. What Genius predicted ninety years ago has become fact. The Temple stands by the River, the bridge is firm and wide. The Genius of Germany is no longer a sighing, sickly youth, pining after the unattainable, but, having married his ideal, is now embodied in the mighty Chancellor whose state-craft founded the new Empire, and whose word is a power among the nations.

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## APPENDIX TO FAUST.

### I.

#### LESSING'S "FAUST."

ALL that we know of the plan of Lessing's "Faust" is derived from a letter written after his death by Engel to Karl Lessing, a younger brother of the poet. In this letter he communicates a sketch which Lessing had confided to him of the yet unfinished work.

Satan is represented holding a council and receiving reports from his agents of their doings on the earth. One devil boasts of having destroyed by fire a pious poor man's hut, and left him utterly destitute and lost. "Yes," says Satan, "lost to us indeed, and forever. To make a pious poor man still poorer is only to bind him more closely to God." The second boasts of having wrecked a ship containing a company of usurers. "They all perished," he says, "and they are now yours." "Traitor!" replies Satan, "they were mine already; had you suffered them to live, they would have spread ruin far and wide, and caused many to sin. All that we lost by your folly. Back with you to hell! you are destroying my kingdom." Finally there comes a devil who reports that he has accomplished no deed as yet,

but has an idea, which if he can realize it will put all that the rest have done to shame: that is, to rob God of his favorite, — “a solitary studious youth devoted entirely to wisdom, for her sake renouncing every passion, and therefore dangerous to us if ever he becomes a teacher of the people; but as yet I have found in him no weakness by which I can get hold of him.”

“Fool!” says Satan, “has he not a thirst for knowledge?”

“Above all mortals.”

“Then leave him to me; that is sufficient for his ruin.”

And he resolves at once to bring about that ruin. But the angel of Providence, who has been hovering over the assembly, foretells to us the spectators the fruitlessness of Satan's strategy in the solemn but gently uttered words which are heard from on high, “Ye shall not prevail!” The youth to be seduced is Faust, whom the angel saves by burying him in a deep sleep and creating in his place a phantom Faust, on whom the devils try their arts, and who, just as they feel secure of their prey, vanishes, and leaves them gnashing their teeth with rage; while to the real, sleeping Faust all that has happened to the phantom is a dream, from which he awakes, thankful for the warning vision, and more than ever confirmed in his virtues and wisdom.

From this it appears that Lessing, no more than Goethe, could accept the idea of eternal perdition for the seeker after knowledge implied in the popular legend.

Of the two or three fragments of his drama, there is one impressive scene in which Faust summons devils in order to select a servant from among them. He questions them as to their swiftness. One professes to be swift as the arrows of pestilence; another travels on the wings of the wind; another is borne on the beams of light. These are rejected as measuring their swiftness by material standards; they are Satan's messengers in the world of bodies. Turning to his messengers in the world of spirits, Faust asks of one, —

How swift art thou?

*Spirit.* Swift as the thoughts of men.



*Faust.* That is something! Yet the thoughts of men are not always swift; not when truth and virtue challenge their service, — then they are very slow. (*To another.*) How swift are you?

*Spirit.* Swift as the vengeance of the avenger.

*Faust.* Of the avenger? Of what avenger?

*Spirit.* Of the Mighty, the Terrible, who has reserved vengeance for himself alone, because he delights in it.

*Faust.* Devil, you blaspheme, for I see you are trembling. Swift said you as the vengeance of — I had almost named him. No! let him not be named among us. Swift call you his vengeance? Yet I still live, I still sin.

*Spirit.* That he still permits you to sin is his vengeance.

*Faust.* That I should first learn this from a devil! No, his vengeance is not swift. Away with you! (*To the last spirit.*) How swift are you?

*Spirit.* Neither more nor less swift than the transition from good to evil.

*Faust.* Ah, you are the devil for me! Swift as the transition from good to evil! Yes, that *is* swift, — nothing swifter than that. Get you gone, ye terrors of Orcus! Away! The transition from good to evil, — I have experienced how swift that is; I have experienced it!

## II.

### TRANSLATION OF THE EASTER SONG.

#### CHORUS OF ANGELS.

Christ has arisen!  
Joy! ye dispirited  
Mortals, whom merited,  
Trailing, inherited  
Woes did imprison!

#### CHORUS OF WOMEN.

Costly devices  
We had prepared,  
Shroud and sweet spices,  
Linen and nard.

Woe! the disaster!  
Whom we here laid,  
Gone is the Master,  
Empty his bed!

CHORUS OF ANGELS.

Christ hath arisen  
Loving and glorious,  
Out of laborious  
Conflict victorious.  
Hail to the risen!

CHORUS OF DISCIPLES.

Hath the inhumated,  
Upward aspiring, —  
Hath he consummated  
All his desiring?  
Is he in growing bliss  
Near to creative joy?  
Wearily we in this  
Earthly house sigh.  
Empty and hollow, us  
Left he unblest?  
Master, thy followers  
Envy thy rest.

CHORUS OF ANGELS.

Christ hath arisen  
Out of corruption's womb!  
Burst every prison!  
Vanish death's gloom!  
Active in charity,  
Praise him in verity!  
His feast, prepare it ye!  
His message bear it ye!  
His joy declare it ye!  
Then is the Master near,  
Then is he here.

## CHAPTER XVI.

SCHILLER.

## I.

IN the public square in Weimar there is a group of statuary representing Goethe and Schiller on one pedestal, holding one wreath, which either seems willing to concede to the other, and neither to claim for himself. To which of the two, as the greater poet, that crown more fitly belongs, is a question on which different opinions were entertained by their own contemporaries. And even now, though settled in favor of Goethe by the critics and the highest culture, if submitted to a plebiscite, to be decided on grounds of personal preference and enjoyment of their works, it is Schiller, most likely, that would carry the vote.

Carlyle, comparing the two, pronounces Goethe the national poet. If by "national" is meant the most idiomatically German, I agree with him. But if the test of nationality is national acceptance, the poet's popularity with his own countrymen, then surely it is Schiller rather than Goethe to whom that title must be ascribed. The former is emphatically the poet of the people. His is the larger audience and the fuller response. Goethe speaks with greater authority to men of high culture; but his works are read by comparatively few. Except in his songs, whose popularity is unbounded, it cannot

be said of him that the common people hear him gladly. But Schiller, who addresses the average intellect, is everywhere at home, — the inmate of the house, the idol of the heart. The centennial anniversary of his birth in 1859 was celebrated more widely than that of his rival ten years before, — more widely and more enthusiastically than that of any other poet of old or recent time. If popularity were the measure of genius, there would be no question as to Schiller's superiority.

This popularity is partly due to perfect intelligibility, absence of everything enigmatical, of everything that puzzles and taxes the understanding in Schiller's writings, but more to the showy enthusiasm which pervades them, — so strongly contrasting the subtle irony which envelops those of Goethe, and which, though it may cover profounder meanings, can never command the general ear. A consequence of this enthusiasm, and its natural medium, is the fiery eloquence which characterizes Schiller's style. In this again he differs widely from his calmer friend. Eloquence is always popular; and Schiller is, I think, the most eloquent of poets. Byron alone of modern English poets approaches him in that particular. Eloquence and poetry are quite distinct; the one consists in forcible statement, the other in delicate perception and subtle suggestions; the office of the former is to stir the feelings, that of the latter to entertain the imagination; the one tends to excitement, the other to contemplation. Schiller, in his earlier phase, like Byron, is the poet of passion rather than of thought; the fire of his verse eclipses the truth of his vision, as a conflagration hides the stars. But he lived to outgrow these hectic fervors. The fire which burns so fiercely in his "Robbers," in "Kabale und



Liebe," and "Fiesco," cooled down in the philosophic-artistic atmosphere of Jena and Weimar. The young Titan ceased to storm the social Olympus; he became an Olympian himself, sitting at the right hand of majesty, and dispensing his "Wallenstein," his "Song of the Bell," his "Wilhelm Tell," from the serene height of dispassionate, self-sufficing art.

Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller was born at Marbach, in Würtemberg, then a duchy, on the 10th of November, in 1759. The only son of a worthy and energetic officer in the ducal army, he was destined by his father for the office of preacher in the Lutheran Church. The early education of the boy was shaped with reference to that destination. But Duke Charles, of Würtemberg, had recently established a military school at Ludwigsburg, and in 1772 invited the officers in his army to send their sons thither for education at the expense of the Government. Friedrich, at the age of fifteen, became a beneficiary of that institution as a student of medicine. The school was subsequently transplanted from Ludwigsburg to Stuttgart.

We shall expect to find in the young medical student, between the ages of fifteen and twenty, some presage of the future poet,—the rival of Goethe, the idol of his nation. Of genuine poetic feeling, or poetic vision, we find very little, but great intellectual activity and decided indications of a preference for literary pursuits; accompanying these, a blind impulsiveness, a headlong zeal, which overpowered not only correct judgment but true perception and even natural feeling. In an exercise of self-examination required by his teacher, he avows a devotion to the Duke exceeding all filial obli-

gation. In an anniversary Address to the Fräulein von Hohenheim, he professes to see in the Duke's mistress the ideal of feminine virtue.

Fierce extravagance, intellectual violence, was the characteristic vice of the youth. The Duke's birthday was celebrated by a dramatic performance, in which the students were the actors. The play selected for the purpose was Goethe's "Clavigo." Schiller took the part of Clavigo. His rendering of it is reported to have been an absurd exhibition, a frightful screaming and roaring, furious gesticulation, provoking laughter. His biographer, Goedeke, says: —

"The false high-flying pathos which he found in his favorite authors, or which he put into them, ruled him humanly and poetically. Travesty of human nature he mistook for power, forced humor for feeling, bombastic phrases for inspiration. The tight-laced discipline, the galling drill, which was to have restrained his youthful spirit, served only to hasten its convulsive explosions. Shakspeare seemed to him cold, and was not to his liking."

On the other hand, the wild, declamatory, aggressive writings of that period — the Storm-and-stress period of German literature — took complete possession of Schiller's soul; and while a student at Stuttgart he planned, and in great part composed, his "Robbers," in which all the extravagances of that period found their highest expression, and the period itself its final consummation.

In 1778 he took the first prize in anatomy. In the year following he received three prizes, — one in *Materia-medica*, and two in *Therapeutics*. The distribution of prizes to meritorious students was a festive occasion, over which the Duke himself presided. That of 1779

was signalized by the presence of the Grand-Duke of Weimar and Goethe, then visitors at Stuttgart. One can imagine the flutter created in the breasts of the candidates by these distinguished guests, especially the latter, already famous, and in the full bloom of his faultless beauty. Goethe has not recorded the occasion; nor does it appear that in after years he recognized in his friend and rival the medical student of the Carlschule. On the other hand, it is not unlikely that Schiller, as he went up in his stiff uniform, with his sword on his thigh, his three-cornered hat in his hand, a hundred literary projects and his half-finished "Robbers" in his brain, to receive his award at the hands of his patron, may have dreamed of one day occupying a place on the German Parnassus by the side of the illustrious stranger.

It was not until the close of the year 1780 that Schiller was judged to have completed his academic course. He left the Carlschule, and obtained the post of physician to a regiment of grenadiers then stationed at Stuttgart, with a monthly salary of eighteen florins, — somewhat less than four dollars per week. The position allowed him ample time for literary labors, which unhappily were not always guided by good taste nor directed to worthy aims. He edited the "Anthology," a miscellaneous collection of poems, in which Schiller's own productions are no longer distinguishable from those of other contributors, but for whose licentious tone — an offence alike to good morals and æsthetic propriety — the editor must be held responsible.

I cannot suppose that Schiller's heart was in this work, — that the real nature of the man expressed itself in these erotic and erratic effusions. They repre-

sent the crudeness of his youth, his six years' seclusion from all refining social influence, the contamination of loose associates and evil example. But all Schiller was in "The Robbers," which was now completed, and in 1781 brought out for the first time in the theatre at Mannheim, with immense success. No work since "Werther" had so electrified the world. More even than "Werther" it won the popular ear, the stage combining with the press to promote its circulation. The sorrows of Werther were forgotten in the agonies of Moor; Götz, with the iron fist, sunk into insignificance before this great child of the imagination.

On the other hand, grave conservatives were shocked by its audacity, and took alarm at the drift of its sentiment. Said one of this class to Goethe: "Had I been God, and about to make the world, and could I have foreseen that 'The Robbers' would be written in it, I would have desisted, and forborne to create such a world."

Carlyle says that the publication of "The Robbers" forms an era in the world's literature. It was in substance a protest against old, effete, but still oppressive traditions, against feudal anachronisms, against the unrighteous tyranny of custom. This protest was in the air; it was the spirit of the time. Aggravated in Schiller's case, no doubt, by bitter experience of personal restraint, and a certain "savageness of unreclaimed blood," it found vent in a roar which startled the eagles of dominion asleep on their sceptres,—a prophecy of the storm which soon after burst upon Europe and shook the solid world.

I fancy "The Robbers" is not much read nowadays, except by very young people. To mature minds and educated taste, its wild rant and monstrous exaggera-



tions are intolerable. No one repudiated that style of composition more heartily than Schiller himself in after years, when the influence of Goethe, the study of the best models, and the experience of life had pruned the excrescences and tempered the flashy fervor of his Muse. And yet it has seemed to me that "The Robbers," with all its absurdities and imperfections, as it was the earliest, so it is in some respects the greatest, of Schiller's plays; it has seemed to me that the promise implied in this firstling of his genius was never quite realized. I find in none of his subsequent works the same force, originality, and wealth of imagination. If the poet's art in his later performances had learned not to "overstep the modesty of nature," it unlearned also the force and freedom of nature whose modesty had been overstepped. "Mary Stuart," "Wallenstein," and "William Tell" exhibit greater reach of thought, clearer judgment, higher finish, maturer views of nature and life, truer perception of the rules and limits and legitimate objects of dramatic art; but the stamp of genius is less conspicuous in these compositions. Of the works of the author's maturer years, "The Maid of Orleans" alone displays, without its excesses, something of the glow and intensity of "The Robbers."

The fable of "The Robbers" is simple, and, barring its extravagance, well contrived. The old Count von Moor has two sons. The elder, Carl, is sent to the University, where he leads a wild life, of which he tires, and for which in a letter he begs his father's pardon and the payment of his debts. The younger son, Franz, who remains at home, and in whom the author figures a consummate villain, intercepts the letter, and pretending private information,

received from a correspondent at Leipsic, represents his brother an abandoned profligate. Then, in order to separate forever father and son, and thus to possess himself of his brother's share of the inheritance, Franz forges a letter, in which the old man disinherits Carl and forbids his return. Carl, in his despair, heads a band of robbers, whose exploits constitute a considerable portion of the piece. Meanwhile Franz, impatient to get possession of the estate, gives out that his father is dead. A mock funeral is held, while the old man is thrown into a dungeon, where it is intended that he shall die of hunger.

Weary of his brigandage, desirous of revisiting the scenes of his childhood, and of seeing, as a stranger, the maiden to whom he was betrothed before entering the University, Carl Moor introduces himself into the paternal castle in disguise; an accident discovers to him the imprisonment of his father yet alive, whom he liberates, but who dies of the shock occasioned by learning that his favorite son is a robber. Franz, finding himself detected, puts an end to his life to escape the vengeance with which he is threatened, and the play concludes with Carl's declaration of his intention to deliver himself up to justice. A price has been set upon his head, and a poor laborer, to whom he will reveal himself, shall earn the reward.

This ground-plot furnishes occasion for deeply moving and pathetic scenes, and in such the play abounds. The interest turns mainly on the character of Carl Moor, which the poet represents as noble, and even sublime. Though driven by desperation to embrace the life of an outlaw, he is figured as better than his pursuits, elevated above his associates, morally as well as intellectually. He can never forget what he might have been, nor forgive himself for what he is. In a celebrated scene of

the fourth act, the sense of his lost estate overwhelms him with an agony of remorse. Gazing on the setting sun, he exclaims : —

“So dies a hero ! When a boy it was my favorite thought to live like that, to die like that. It was a boyish thought. . . .

“Oh that I could return into my mother’s womb ! Oh that I could be born a beggar ! I would ask no more than to be like one of those day laborers yonder. I would weary myself until the blood rolled from my temples, to purchase the luxury of one noonday nap, the blessedness of a single tear !”

In the fifth act self-despair drives him to the brink of suicide, and we have this soliloquy, uttered with pistol in hand : —

“Time and eternity linked together by a single moment ! Awful key that locks the prison of life behind me, and unbars to me the dwelling of eternal night ! Tell me, whither, oh whither, wilt thou lead me ? Unknown, never circumnavigated land ! See, humanity collapses in the presence of this idea ! The strain of the finite mind gives way, and imagination, the wanton ape of the senses, mocks our credulity with strange shadows. Be what thou wilt, thou nameless yonder, if only this my Self remain true. Be what thou wilt, so I can but take my Self across with me. The things without us are but the varnish of the man ; I am my heaven and my hell. What if thou shouldst assign to me alone some burnt-out world, which thou hast banished from thy sight, where solitary night and the eternal waste were my only prospect ? I shall then people the dumb desert with my fancies, and shall have an eternity of leisure in which to dissect the confused image of the universal woe ! Or wilt thou lead me through ever new births and ever new scenes of misery to annihilation ? Can I not rend asunder the life-thread which shall be woven for me hereafter as easily as I do this ? Thou canst turn me into nothing, but that privilege thou canst not take from me.”

Of the scene in which Moor discovers his father in the dungeon in which he had been immured and left to starve by the younger son, Coleridge expressed his admiration in a sonnet addressed "To the Author of 'The Robbers'": —

"Schiller! that hour I would have wished to die,  
If through the shuddering midnight I had sent,  
From the dark dungeon of the tower time-rent,  
That fearful voice, a famished father's cry,  
Lest in some after moment aught more mean  
Might stamp me mortal."

My last quotation from "The Robbers" shall be the closing portion of the dream which the villain Franz, on the eve of his doom, relates to his aged confidential servant. It is a dream of the Last Judgment: —

"We all stood pale as snow, and anxious expectation throbbed in every breast. Then I thought I heard my name called first from amid the thunders of the Mount; and my innermost marrow froze within me, and my teeth chattered aloud. And immediately the scales began to sound, and the rock thundered, and the hours went by. One by one they passed by the scale on the left hand, and each one as it passed threw in a damning sin. The scale on the left hand grew to a mountain, but the other, filled with the blood of the Atonement, held it still poised in air. At last there came an old man bowed down with sorrow, his arm gnawed as he had gnawed it in his raging hunger. All eyes turned toward him: I knew him well. And he severed a lock from his silver hair and threw it into the scale of transgressions; and behold, it sank instantly to the bottom, and the scale of Redemption rose to the sky! Then I heard a voice from out the smoke: 'Mercy, mercy to every sinner on earth and in hell. Thou only art rejected!'"

Could Schiller have obtained a copyright for "The Robbers" on its first publication, his fortune would have



been secured by a work of such wide demand. But the profits, as usual, fell to the publishers, while the author derived from this his first literary venture, along with great public applause, much private annoyance. A disparaging allusion to the Swiss Canton of the Grisons provoked from that quarter a complaint addressed to the Duke, who in his wisdom straightway laid an injunction on the poet to write no more plays, — *noch sonst so was*, “nor anything of the sort,” as the edict elegantly phrased it. The clause was understood to embrace all possible creations of a poet’s genius. Duke Charles was one of those who believe that the world would be quite as good a world without poetry as with it; he judged that his little Würtemberg would be a great deal better. Had he known what was in this young army-surgeon of his (and he might have known it, had he taken the trouble to read the play); could he have foreseen how contemptible his own name would one day appear beside that of the poet, — all the more contemptible because of this act, — he might have paused before hurling the boomerang whose worst effect recoiled upon himself in the loss of his greatest subject, the greatest son of that Suabian soil since Eberhard the Greiner. To impose silence on a poet with such a mission was like charging the sun to withdraw his beams, or the clouds to withhold their rain. Yet Schiller, whose poetic consciousness was still imperfectly developed, might have hesitated longer between obedience to his genius and obedience to his Prince, had not the mandate been accompanied by an arrest and temporary imprisonment for going to Mannheim without leave of absence to witness the performance of his play. This personal indignity precipitated a step which would no doubt have been ultimately taken without such incentive.

With the aid of a friend he made his escape from Stuttgart and took refuge in Mannheim, a city beyond the jurisdiction of his oppressor.

But Mannheim, though it offered Schiller an asylum, refused him bread. He had thrown himself upon the world with no resource but his pen, — a very ineffectual one in those days when employed in literary labor. One use which he made of it was not literary but practical. There has been found among his manuscripts a letter to the Duke, dated from Mannheim, begging pardon for quitting his dominions, and praying that the literary injunction might be removed. There is no evidence that the letter was sent; and one would hope that the self-respect of the poet prevailed over hunger, or the fear of hunger, and withheld the degrading petition.

His second dramatic attempt, his “Fiesco,” proved a *fiasco* so far as the theatre of Mannheim was concerned. Dolberg, theatrical manager, declined it as being unfit for the stage. In Berlin it met with better success, but brought no gain to the author, who in his extremity had been fain to sell it to a publisher for eleven louis d’or (about fifty dollars).

We next find Schiller, under the name of Ritter, a refugee at Bauerbach, an estate of his patroness the Frau von Wolzogen, mother of one of his fellow-students at the Carlschule. Here he composed his third drama, “Luise Millerin,” afterward entitled “Kabale und Liebe,” whose appearance created a sensation second only to that which greeted “The Robbers.” It presented a domestic tragedy such as the state of society at that time may have made a thing of frequent occurrence. Its characters and situations are nearer to Nature and fact than those of “The Robbers,” and if less romantic, better suited to the stage.

The substantial truth of its portraiture was attested by the hearty and wide response of the public. It is said that when the piece was produced for the first time at Mannheim, in 1784, at the close of the second act the whole body of spectators, with one accord, started from their seats, and signified their delight with a round of tumultuous applause. The poet, who happened to be present in a private box, arose and acknowledged the compliment in a few appropriate words. This was the last triumph which Schiller won from theatre-goers in the way of uproarious popular demonstration. His subsequent productions, although of a far higher order, and because they were of a higher order, were less adapted to elicit such effects.

These first three plays — “The Robbers,” “Fiesco,” and “Kabale und Liebe” — constitute a distinct and completed phase in the literary history of the author. These were prose compositions; those which followed were written in verse, and even on that account perhaps less conducive to vulgar excitement, because more restrained.

“Don Carlos,” his next performance, marks the transition from the poet’s first stage, the period of youthful extravagance, — the Storm-and-stress period, — to the calmer, purer style of his riper years. It is still marked, and to some extent marred, by the vice of its predecessors, — excessive idealism. The coloring is overdone, the sentiment exaggerated, the characters extreme, — that of Posa, especially, a wild conceit. He is the real hero of the piece, — a more significant figure than the Prince, whom he quite overshadows; but his heroism is too ideal, his magnanimity too ethereal, for the place he occupies in the Spanish Court. But with all its faults,

“Don Carlos” is still a noble work, — one of the choice gems of dramatic literature. It was not so effective on the stage as “Kabale und Liebe,” but it found as cordial a welcome with the reading public, and obtained the votes of a more discerning tribunal than the Mannheim play-house. Among its best scenes, most expressive of the spirit and manners of the age of Philip II., is the colloquy between the King and the Chief of the Inquisition. The inexorable pride of Castilian majesty on the one hand, and the awful power and omnipresent jurisdiction of the Romish Church on the other are typified in the two men. The Inquisitor, an old man of ninety years and blind, enters leaning on his staff, conducted by two Dominicans. As he passes through the ranks of the grandees, they all prostrate themselves on the ground, and kiss the hem of his garment while he imparts his benediction.

*Inq.* Do I stand before the King?

*King.* Yes.

*Inq.* I no longer expected such an interview!

*King.* I renew a scene of former years. Philip the Infante asks advice of his teacher.

*Inq.* My pupil Charles, your great father, needed no counsel.

*King.* So much the happier he. I have committed murder, Cardinal, and have no rest.

*Inq.* Whom have you murdered?

*King.* An act of deception unexampled —

*Inq.* I know it.

*King.* What do you know? — through whom, since when?

*Inq.* For years, what you know only since sunset.

*King* (*surprised*). You have known of this man already?  
(*Referring to Posa.*)

*Inq.* His life from beginning to end is recorded in the sacred registers of Santa Casa.



*King.* And yet he went about unhindered?

*Inq.* His tether was long, but not to be broken.

*King.* He was already beyond the limits of my domain.

*Inq.* Wherever he might be, there was I also.

*King.* It was known in whose hands I was, — why was I not cautioned?

*Inq.* I give back the question. Why did you not inquire when you threw yourself into the arms of this man? You knew him; a glance unmasked to you the heretic. What induced you to withhold the victim from the Holy Office? Is it thus that we are trifled with? . . .

*King.* He has been sacrificed.

*Inq.* No; he has been murdered ignominiously, sinfully. The blood that should have been gloriously shed for our honor has been spilt by the hand of an assassin. The man was ours. What authorized you to meddle with the sacred property of the Order? God gave him to the needs of this time, in order to make an example of boastful reason. That was my deliberate plan. Now it is frustrated, — the work of many years. We are robbed, and you have only bloody hands. . . . What could this man be to you? What new thing had he to show to you for which you were not prepared? Are you so little acquainted with enthusiasm and love of innovation? The boastful language of the would-be world-reformers, did it sound so unwonted in your ears? If the fabric of your convictions can be overthrown by words, with what face, I must ask, could you sign the death-warrant of the hundred thousand weak souls who for nothing worse have suffered at the stake?

*King.* I craved a man. These Domingos —

*Inq.* Wherefore men? Men are for you but ciphers; nothing more. Must I repeat with my gray pupil the very elements of monarchical art? The god of this earth must learn to dispense with that which may be denied him. If you whine for sympathy, do you not confess yourself on a level with the world? . . . You have had your lesson. Now return to us again. If I did not stand now before you, by the living God you would have stood thus to-morrow before me!

*King.* Forbear such language! Restrain yourself, Priest! I will not bear it; I cannot allow myself to be spoken to in this tone!

*Inq.* Why then did you summon the shade of Samuel? I gave two kings to the throne of Spain, and I hoped to leave behind me a well-grounded work. I have lost the fruit of my life. Don Philip himself causes my fabric to shake. And now, Sire, why am I summoned? What is wanted of me here? I am not disposed to repeat this visit.

*King.* One service more, — the last; then may you depart in peace. . . . My son meditates rebellion.

*Inq.* What do you intend?

*King.* Nothing — or all.

*Inq.* What is meant here by all?

*King.* He shall escape, if I may not cause him to be put to death. . . . Can you establish for me a new creed which shall justify the bloody murder of a child?

*Inq.* To satisfy eternal Justice, the Son of God died on the tree.

*King.* Will you propagate this doctrine through all Europe?

*Inq.* Wherever the cross is revered.

*King.* I shall sin against Nature; can you silence her mighty voice?

*Inq.* Nature has no voice at the tribunal of faith.

*King.* I resign my office of Judge into your hands. May I entirely withdraw?

*Inq.* Give him to me.

*King.* He is my only son, — for whom have I gathered?

*Inq.* Better have gathered for corruption than for liberty.

For the student of Spanish history, the unhistoric character of Don Carlos may somewhat impair the value of the play. Certainly, there is not much resemblance between Schiller's hero and the unfortunate son of Philip II. But in a work of art poetic truth is the first essential; if an author is faithful in that, we can allow him a good deal of latitude in the other kind.

In December, 1784, before it was put upon the stage, the first act of "Don Carlos" was read by Schiller at the Court of the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt, where the Duke of Saxe Weimar, Karl August, the poet's future patron, happened then to be sojourning as guest. The Duke was much pleased, and desired to manifest his good-will toward the author. The way in which he did so was characteristic of the time and the nation. Karl August's pecuniary resources were small; the expenses of the little duchy were scarce covered by its income; there was no vacant office to bestow; he could offer no donation. He did what he could: he conferred on Schiller the title of *Rath* ("counsellor"). The title was an empty sound; it referred to no council-board; it involved no function; no counsel was asked of, or given by, the recipient. Still it was a *title*; and a title in Germany is an acquisition of immense importance, its recognition rigidly exacted by social etiquette, never to be forgotten in addressing the bearer, or, with a feminine termination, the bearer's wife. You must say *Frau Pastorin* to the parson's wife as punctually as *Herr Pastor* to the parson. Be the title never so humble, it must be duly rendered, — in default of any other, a title coined from the occupation, if not a mechanical one: Mr. Fish-inspector, Mrs. Fish-inspector; or, if that functionary employs a substitute, Mr. Fish-inspector's substitute, Mrs. Fish-inspector's substitute.

Schiller was now no longer plain Herr Schiller, but Herr Rath, — an entirely different being in the vulgar estimation. When he married, the title was changed for the higher one of "Hofrath, aulic Counsellor," — equally without office. Unfortunately, increase of honor was not attended by increase of means. Herr Rath continued

miserably poor. Theatrical managers and publishers grew rich on the fruits of his genius, while the favorite poet of the people starved, and began to think seriously of resuming his medical profession as a means of support. The extent of his popularity, and what is better of his influence on earnest minds, was unknown to him. The newspaper press was not at that time the power nor the medium of intelligence which it now is. The first assurance of the reality and scope of his poetic vocation seems to have come to him with a missive from Dresden, containing tokens of little material, but to him of immense moral, value from four anonymous contributors, accompanied by a letter expressive of cordial and even enthusiastic regard. One of these contributors, and the writer of the letter, was Christian Gottlieb Körner, father of Theodore Körner, the poet, — the Tyrtæus of his nation, and one of the choice lyrists of modern time. Körner the elder, who held at this time a government office at Dresden, was a man of culture, addicted to letters and to music; not wealthy, but able from the income of his office to render pecuniary assistance to his friends. Schiller soon became personally acquainted with him; they corresponded, and their published correspondence, extending through a series of years, is one of the chief sources of our knowledge of the poet's history, especially of his interior life. The friendship of this large-hearted man proved to be of essential service, and gave a new turn to Schiller's fortunes. The bounty of Körner relieved him of immediate pecuniary embarrassment; and in course of time another patron, the Duke of Weimar, through the mediation of Goethe, found a place for him as Professor of History in the University of Jena.



History had been for some time his favorite study ; in a letter to Körner he had expressed the wish to be able for ten years to devote himself exclusively to that pursuit. In 1788 the proposal of the professorship was made to him ; in March, 1789, he received the formal appointment, and on the 26th of May he gave his introductory lecture. Goedeke describes the scene ; the room selected for the occasion was Reinhold's auditorium, capable of seating eighty persons, with standing-room for perhaps twenty more. The lecture was to begin at six ; at half-past five the room was completely filled, — then the vestibule, the stairs, the entry below, and new crowds were seen from the window flocking to the place. Finally, some one suggested that another larger lecture-room might be found ; and word was given that Griesbach's auditorium, the largest in the city, could be obtained. Upon this the whole company, those already on the ground and those who were pressing for admission, started for Griesbach's. They ran down the long Johannis Street at full speed, each eager to secure a place. The occupants of the houses on either side, not knowing what had happened, rushed to the windows, wondering what might be the cause of the unusual tumult ; the dogs barked, and the guard at the Castle began to move. It was thought at first to be an alarm of fire ; but on inquiry, the answer was, "The new Professor is going to read." The larger lecture-room, capable of accommodating from three to four hundred hearers, was soon filled to overflowing ; the vestibule was crowded, even the stairs were occupied, and great numbers went away unable to gain admission into the house. The hearers were not disappointed ; the impression made by the academic *débutant* was every way

satisfactory, nothing else was talked of in the city, and in the evening Schiller was serenaded,—a thing unexampled in the case of a new professor.

The enthusiasm continued for a time,—so long as the lectures were of a general introductory character. But when it came to the stated work of the office, to historic details, there was a great falling off. The number of paying hearers—one of the chief sources of a German professor's support—was extremely small. Schiller's salary, independent of student's fees, was but two hundred thalers. In the first year, he read five lectures a week to his class beside one public lecture. Each lecture was a new composition written out; and the preparation of them—added to the delivery, the getting up of the material, the studying of authorities—gave him, a feeble-bodied man, more than enough to do. The strain upon his strength was too great, and led to the sickness which not only shortened his days, but before they were numbered rendered him again and again, for months at a time, incapable of labor, and obliged him in less than two years to relinquish the duties of his professorship. Meanwhile he had married Charlotte von Lengefeld, to whom he had been for some time betrothed, after hesitating awhile between her and her sister Caroline. She proved to be all that a man and a poet can desire in a help-mate; and to her loving care it was probably owing that he lived to complete the works which have made him immortal.

In 1791, the darkest of Schiller's brief and laborious years, his case seemed utterly desperate. A severe illness had brought him to the brink of death, and when partially restored he was still for a long time too weak for remunerative labor. The Duke either could not or would not

afford the necessary means of support until he should fully recover his strength. Beyond his small pension of two hundred thalers, which appears to have been continued to him, he had no dependence or prospect. Goethe seems not to have known of his distress, and was not yet intimate with his brother poet.

“ But Fate will not permit  
The seed of gods to die.”

It could not be that the world should miss a “Wallenstein” or a “Song of the Bell;” and in this sore strait there came from a distant quarter unlooked-for aid. A hand from the clouds replenished the failing lamp. Baggesen, a Danish poet, a fervent admirer of Schiller, on a visit to Jena for the purpose of seeing him, had been informed by Reinold of his distressed circumstances, and the impossibility of his accomplishing anything more in the way of poetic creation without relief from pecuniary cares (which incapacitated him for free intellectual effort), and without a year’s rest.

Fired by this suggestion, Baggesen, on his return to Denmark, instituted a Schiller-festival, for the purpose of calling the attention of his countrymen to the merits and claims of his great contemporary. The festival was to take place by the sea-side in the open air, and to last three days. In the course of it Baggesen was to recite the “Ode to Joy,” one of the most spirited of Schiller’s poems, — in fact, a wild composition, whose intoxicating effect scarce needed the addition of the wine which flowed without stint, to excite to the uttermost the enthusiasm of the hearers. A report of Schiller’s death, which reached Copenhagen just before the time appointed for these festivities, did not prevent the meeting or change



its programme, but only gave it a more exalted character, and added to Baggesen's recitation a stanza of his own, invoking the spirit of the departed to unite with the revellers.

The false report was soon contradicted ; and on Baggesen's representation of Schiller's distress, two noble-minded men, who had also felt the fascination of his spirit, — Count Schimmelmann, prime-minister of Denmark, and Christian Friedrich, Duke of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg, — united in a letter to the suffering poet, in which, after words of cordial respect and expressions of gratitude for what they owed to him, they cautiously, and with a tender regard for his self-respect, entreated his acceptance, for three years, of an annual pension of one thousand thalers, to enable him — such was their apology for the boldness of the offer — to enable him, relieved from the necessity of present exertion, to fully recover the bodily health on which depended the possibility of his continuing to bless the world with the fruits of his genius. It was a beautiful act, one of the choice bits of literary history ; and, considering the source of this opportune gift, — a tribute rendered, a benefaction conferred, by strangers, by men of another land and another tongue, on one whom his own countrymen had neglected at his utmost need, — it may be reckoned among the curiosities of literature. Germany owes to Denmark the opportunity, the possibility, of some of her choicest literary treasures ; and may blush to remember that among all her princes, and her thirty millions of inhabitants, not one was found to render the service volunteered by two individuals of her diminutive neighbor-kingdom.

An annual grant of a thousand thalers does not sound



very large in American ears ; but sums of money must be estimated relatively to time and place. For a German in those days, for a man like Schiller, it was an ample pension, — more than sufficient for all his wants. He could not hesitate to accept the generous gift. Not for his own sake simply. Had it been a mere question of bodily well-being, or of added years, his sensitive nature might have shrunk from such a weight of personal obligation. It mattered little to him how long his eyes might continue to behold the sun, and his body to partake of the fruits of the earth. But the offer had quite another aspect ; he viewed it grandly in the light of the duty he owed to his genius, which was not his own, but a sacred trust. Conscious of great designs, of ability to give to the world something greater, better, than he had yet produced, he did not feel himself at liberty to decline the only means, so far as he could see, of bringing forth what he felt to be in him, — of fulfilling his mission to the world. He accepted the princely gift freely ; he accepted it grandly, not as a tribute to himself, but as an offering to the Muses, to whose service he was vowed.

It is not too much to say that Schiller's resurrection from what seemed to be helpless and hopeless prostration, to such health and activity as he afterward attained, was mainly due to the princely bounty of these foreign friends. Morally, no less than physically, their loving tribute was a well of new life to his stricken, fainting soul, and dates the beginning of the richest and most brilliant epoch of his literary history.

## II.

THE first use which Schiller made of the leisure secured to him by the Danish pension, after some journeying which he undertook for the benefit of his health, was to devote himself to the study of Kant, whose philosophy was then a recent evangel, and possessed for the North German mind an authority little less than divine. It is characteristic of the difference between the two men that Schiller the idealist should take to metaphysics, and Goethe the realist to natural history. Goethe felt no call to analyze his consciousness. "I have never cared," he said, "to think about thinking." And to Chancellor Müller he declared, "I have as much [metaphysical] philosophy as I shall need until my blessed end; in fact, I could do without any." At the same time he made a remark about Cousin, which shows that he knew very well what belongs to the essence of philosophy. Cousin, he said, does not understand that though a man may be an eclectic philosopher, there can be no eclectic philosophy.

It is not surprising that, loving and admiring Schiller as he did when once they were fairly brought into contact, Goethe should lament what he regarded as misdirection in his friend's pursuit. He said:—

"I cannot but think that Schiller's turn for philosophy has injured his poetry, because it led him to prefer ideas to Nature, indeed almost to annihilate Nature. . . . It was sad to see how a man so highly gifted tormented himself with systems of philosophy which would no way profit him."

Unquestionably, Goethe profited more by the study of Nature than Schiller by the study of Kant; but I cannot think that the metaphysical pursuits of the latter were

injurious in their influence on his genius, as certainly they were not without fruit in his works. They moderated the glow of his fancy, toned down the daring extravagance of his language, instructed his crude thought, and deepened the import of his words. Genius is blest with a good digestion. Let no one think to prescribe its dietetic. The food it elects is the food it needs; whatever it devours it turns to blood. To the study of Kant we owe the *Æsthetic Essays*, not the least important of Schiller's works, — essays on Grace and Dignity, on our pleasure in the Tragic, on *Æsthetic Education*, on Pathos, on Naïve and Sentimental Poetry, on the Sublime, and other topics; essays rich in suggestion, and which handle abstruse themes with an ease and lucidity unknown to the metaphysicians proper of Germany. For the rest, it would seem that Schiller studied metaphysics as means not as end, as stimulus not as goal, and was well aware of the insufficiency of all metaphysical systems, — their inability to satisfy the cravings of the mind, or to solve the real problems of life. He hints as much in a comic poem, “*Die Philosophen*,” consisting of a series of hexameters and pentameters, in which he describes a conference of metaphysicians in the underworld with a pupil, who applies to them for instruction.

PUPIL.

Happy to find you, my masters, *in pleno* together assembled.  
One thing is needful; I come hoping to gain it from you.

ARISTOTLE.

Well then, to business, my friend. We take the Journal of  
Jena  
Here in hell, and we know all that is happening above.

PUPIL.

So much the better, then; give me (until you do, I shall stay here)  
Some proposition whereby every question to solve.

FIRST PHILOSOPHER.

*Cogito ergo sum.* Grant the one, and the other must follow;  
For in order to think, surely a fellow must be.

PUPIL.

*Cogito ergo sum.* But who can be always a-thinking?  
Surely I often *am* when thinking of nothing at all.

SECOND PHILOSOPHER.

Since there are things, there must be an eternal thing at the  
bottom;  
In that thing of all things we, the whole lot of us, float.

THIRD PHILOSOPHER.

Contrariwise, I say, except myself there is nothing;  
All else, seeming to be, is but a bubble in me.

FOURTH PHILOSOPHER.

Two sorts of things I concede, — the world and the soul, we will  
call them.  
Neither the other knows, yet they contrive to agree.

FIFTH PHILOSOPHER.

I am I, I maintain; and if I affirm that I am not,  
I not being affirmed, what is affirmed is not I.

SIXTH PHILOSOPHER.

Concepts there certainly are, — a something conceived then there  
must be,  
Also somewhat that conceives; these all together make three.

PUPIL.

All that, gentlemen, look ye, would not lure a dog from his kennel.  
Propositions I want wherein is something proposed.



## SEVENTH PHILOSOPHER.

Theory yields nothing certain; the truth is not found by such seeking.

Stick to the practical text: all that I should do I can.

## PUPIL.

So I thought it would be; for want of a rational answer,  
Where philosophy ends, preaching of duty begins.

## HUME.

Cease to consult with that set; 't is useless, Kant has confused them.

Ask of me; even in hell true to myself I remain.

## QUESTION OF RIGHT.

Many a year, I confess, my nose I've made use of for smelling;  
Have I a right, now I ask, thus to make use of the same?

## PUFENDORF.

Serious question that. I judge that the prior possession  
Favors your practice; and so take my advice and smell on.

Intellectually, the most important event in Schiller's life was his friendship with Goethe. The union of these two men — rivals in fame, both occupying the height of the literary world of their time, but neither claiming above the other the *ἀκροτάτη κορυφή*, the topmost peak of honor; so like in their aims, so unlike in their mental constitution and worldly fortunes; the one raised high above sordid cares and the little perplexities of life, the other poor, harassed, and struggling; the one calmly great, the other grandly aspiring — has no parallel in literary history. It was not an easy matter for Schiller and Goethe to unite. A mutual repulsion preceded all cordial relations. Their first meeting, which occurred as early as 1788, augured ill for the chances of a future

friendship. Schiller wrote to Körner of that first meeting : —

“We soon made acquaintance, and without the slightest effort. . . . On the whole, I must say that my great idea of him is not lessened by this personal acquaintance. [But, he adds] I doubt whether we shall ever become intimate. . . . His whole being, from the foundation, is entirely different from mine. His world is not my world.”

At another time he writes : —

“He [Goethe] has the talent of conquering men and binding them to him. He makes his existence benevolently felt, but only like a god, without giving himself. This seems to me consistent, well-planned conduct, calculated to secure to himself the highest degree of selfish enjoyment. . . . He is hateful to me, although I love his genius, and think greatly of him. . . . It is quite a peculiar mixture of love and hatred he has awakened in me, — a feeling akin to that which Brutus and Cassius must have felt toward Cæsar.”

And again : —

“With Goethe, when he puts forth his whole strength, I will not compare myself. He has far more genius than I have, greater wealth of knowledge, a more accurate observation ; and to all this he adds an artistic taste, cultivated and sharpened by acquaintance with all the works of art.”

After making this concession he adds, in confidence, writing to the same most intimate friend, Körner : —

“I will open to you my heart. Once for all, this man, this Goethe, stands in my way ; he reminds me so often that Fate has dealt hardly with me. How lightly his genius is borne by his destiny, and how I, up to this moment, have to struggle !”

On the other hand, Goethe, although it was his mediation which procured for Schiller the Jena professorship, was greatly disturbed by the tone and tendency of his dramas, and was shy of associating with one whose ideals were then so different from his own. Notwithstanding these superficial antagonisms, it was impossible that two such spirits should fail to obey the deeper attraction of a common interest, and to blend at last in a cordial union. Landor says: "If there be two great men at opposite ends of the earth, they will seek each other." How much rather when the two are neighbors in space! Goethe has recorded the occasion of their first contact. It was after a lecture, to which both had listened, on some topic of natural history. They discussed together the subject presented by the lecturer. The conference developed a wide difference in the direction of their thought, but it also revealed to each the other's strength in his own position. Goethe, apparently determined to establish a friendly relation, suppressed his irritation at some of Schiller's views, and Schiller met Goethe half way in his readiness to break the ice of reserve between them. They soon found themselves consenting, if not in opinion, in respect and good-will; and the end of the discussion was the beginning of the great duumvirate, which formed an epoch in the lives of both, and of the national literature over which they presided. Goethe became a willing contributor to Schiller's journal, the "*Horen*," in which they led the thought and formed the literary taste of the nation. They wrought together, they conferred together, they aided one another with mutual advice and suggestion; and their correspondence, continued to the time of Schiller's death, embracing a period of nearly ten years, reveals an intellectual

bond without a parallel in the history of authors. It has been aptly characterized as "the richest epistolary treasure in literature."<sup>1</sup>

The following years, from 1794 to 1805, the date of his death, were the richest, the most productive of Schiller's life. To this period belong his most finished works, — "Wallenstein," "Maria Stuart," "The Maid of Orleans," the "Bride of Messina," "William Tell." In these years were also produced, in friendly rivalry with Goethe, those noble ballads, — "The Diver," "Hero and Leander," "The Cranes of Ibycus," "The Fight with the Dragon," "Fridolin," — above all, "The Song of the Bell," the most perfect composition of its kind, and which, had he written nothing else, would entitle its author to immortal fame.

Schiller's genius was essentially dramatic. In true dramatic power, in the combination of poetic thought with dramatic position, he surpasses Goethe. He understood the stage, he appreciated its demands and its returns, and he fitted his spirit to that mould. Goethe would make the stage subservient to his thought; he sacrificed dramatic interest to philosophic. Schiller adapted his thought to the stage, and trusted its power to enforce his word. If Goethe is the first poet, Schiller is the first dramatist, of his nation, — may we not say, the greatest dramatist since the sixteenth century?

Of the plays I have named as the product of the latter period of Schiller's life, "The Maid of Orleans" is the most spirited, the most effective in the representation, unless we except "William Tell." The theme is one of unfading interest, a point of light in a dark and tem-

<sup>1</sup> Calvert, "Goethe, his Life and Works."



pestuous age, the shining of a "good deed in a naughty world." It has been availed of by poets, in drama and epic, before Schiller and since. The simplest statement of it is a poem. In Hallam's bald phrase, "A country girl overthrew the power of England." The bald phrase expresses the bald fact. Henry VI. was proclaimed and crowned King of France. The English, with the aid of Burgundy, had possessed themselves of the greater part of the country, and would, in all probability, have taken Orleans, the key to all the rest, had not this "country girl," this shepherd's daughter, come to the rescue. By her inspired leadership the siege of Orleans was raised, Charles VII. crowned, and France wrested from the hands of the English. That any Frenchman could throw contempt on Jeanne d'Arc, the savior of his country, would seem a monstrous impiety, — and Voltaire's "*Pucelle d'Orléans*" has been characterized as a crime against the nation. It is matter for regret that Joan of Arc should figure in Shakspeare as a vulgar impostor; but we have the consolation of believing that the First Part of "*Henry VI.*" is not Shakspearian, or Shakspearian only in single passages. Schiller is the only poet of a very high order (for Southey I cannot reckon as such) who has even attempted to do full justice to the patriot-shepherdess in a work of art. His "*Jungfrau von Orleans*" is no doubt a highly idealized and glorified presentment of the woman; but such idealization and glorification is not only legitimate but incumbent on the poet in treating such a subject. He is bound to give the pure idea of the person, divested of the earthly accidents, abatements, and disgraces of lowly birth and a rustic home. He has idealized her, as the old Italian painters idealized the humble Galilean woman who bore

the Light of the World. His "Jungfrau" is inspired prophetess, warrior, and tender woman in one.

More questionable is the author's violation of historic fact in the end which he assigns to his heroine, — death in the arms of victory. Certainly, art has its rights as well as history. The poet is not a chronicler; he has a higher function than simply to set forth facts in verse. Nevertheless, on purely artistic grounds, in handling a historic theme, it is hardly expedient to contradict what is fixed, notorious, and historically important. In doing so, the author is in danger of awakening a feeling of resentment unfavorable to the best effect of his work. He loses more by falsification than he gains by substituting a *dénouement* agreeable to our feelings. Schiller was not bound to reproduce the trial of Joan for witchcraft and the condemnation to death at the stake; but he might, without damage to the scope of his play, have omitted the closing scene, leaving the rest as it stands.

The play is introduced by a prelude representing Joan at home, her rural surroundings, her father Thibaut, her sisters and their suitors, with her own lover Raimond. Bertrand, a neighbor fresh from the city with the latest tidings, enters the house bearing a helmet, which he says was left in his hand by an old woman who offered it for sale, but was borne away by the crowd before he could strike a bargain. The Maiden, who has listened in silence until then, stretches an eager hand toward the helmet. "The helmet is mine," she says, — "Mein ist der Helm, und mir gehört er zu." She has long meditated the part she is to bear in the deliverance of her country; she believes herself divinely called to the work; the helmet thus mysteriously conveyed is

accepted as a sign from Heaven, and precipitates her purpose. At the close of the prelude, after the rest are dispersed, she utters her solemn farewell to the scenes of her youth : —

“ Farewell! ye mountains, ye beloved pastures,  
Ye silent, peaceful valleys, fare ye well!  
Joanna shall roam over you no more,  
Joanna bids you evermore farewell!  
Ye meadows that I watered, and ye trees  
Which I have planted, may ye flourish still!  
Farewell! ye grottoes and ye cooling springs;  
Thou Echo, friendly voice of this dear vale,  
Who oft hast answered to my homely lay,  
Farewell! Joanna goes; we part for aye.

. . . . .

“ For He who once on Horeb’s mountain lone  
Conversed with Moses from the bush’s fire,  
And bade him stand before high Pharaoh’s throne;  
He who elected Jesse’s warlike son,  
The shepherd-boy, to be his champion,  
Who still to shepherds wondrous grace hath shown, —  
He spake to me, his handmaid, from that tree:  
‘ Go! thou art sent to testify of me.

. . . . .

“ ‘ For when in battle France’s courage dies,  
And ruin threatens this devoted land,  
Then shalt thou bid my oriflamme arise,  
And like the harvest to the reaper’s hand,  
The conqueror shall fall before thy brand;  
Thou shalt reverse his fortune’s victories,  
To France’s warlike sons salvation bring,  
Deliver Rheims, and crown thy country’s King.’

“ Heaven hath at length vouchsafed to me a sign:  
This helmet God hath sent, it comes from him;  
Its iron thrills me with a power divine;  
I feel the valor of the cherubim,

With tempest's force impelling me to join  
The serried hosts in front of battle grim.  
The war-cry calls me to the fated ground;  
The steeds are rearing, and the trumpets sound."

After this prelude the play follows in the main the course of the story to the opening of the fourth act. The Maiden is intrusted with the command of the French army, which under her guidance and inspiration raises the siege of Orleans, and pursues its victorious course till Charles is crowned at Rheims.

But the play could not end with this consummation. The interest of tragedy does not admit of uninterrupted success; it demands the struggle with adverse fate. The manner in which Schiller attempts to satisfy this demand has seemed to me a weakness in the plot.

The Maid, against all probability and in utter contradiction of the character ascribed to her by the poet, and thus far maintained, falls in love at a glance with the English warrior Lionel, whom she has overcome in battle and is about to slay, but whose life this sudden affection impels her to spare. Her conscience upbraids her with this weakness, as a breach of her vow and a sin against her mission. She is even led to doubt for a time the reality of that mission which, if genuine, ought to have preserved her from so grievous a fault. Accordingly at Rheims, when amid the adoration of the crowd who look upon her as a messenger from Heaven, her father alone impugns her claim to divine inspiration, and charges her publicly with sorcery, she makes no reply to the charge, no attempt to vindicate herself; and when the archbishop adjures her in the name of God to give assurance of her innocence, she remains immovably silent, and refuses to touch the cross which he presents



to her as a test. Then all forsake her; the evidence of her guilt seems irresistible. In consideration of her services, she is permitted to leave the city unmolested, which she does in company with the still faithful Raimond, her rustic lover, the one individual in all the land who stands by her in this extremity, fearing, but not convinced of her guilt.

Awaking at last from the stupor into which her father's accusation and the misgivings of her own conscience on account of her tenderness for Lionel had thrown her, Joan assures Raimond and convinces him of her innocence of the guilt of sorcery. Meanwhile the tide of French success has turned. The English have gained important advantages; a party of them, with Isabeau at their head, have captured Joan. The counsellors of Charles are convinced of their mistake in banishing the Maid. Raimond has satisfied them of her innocence; they resolve if possible to rescue her from the hands of the enemy. Then follows that scene of intensest interest, from which Scott borrowed the idea of a similar one in the novel of "Ivanhoe." Joan, a prisoner in chains, guarded by Isabeau and some soldiers in a watch-tower, hears the report which the warder gives from time to time from the battlements of the tower to the party within, of the progress of the battle in which the French have engaged the English for the recapture of the Maiden. When at last he reports the capture of the king, Joan, after a brief prayer, rends her chains asunder, snatches a sword from the nearest soldier, and rushes into the field. The warder reports her flying with the wings of the wind, faster than his vision can follow; he seems to see her in different places at once; she has rescued the king from the hands of

his captors; the English flee, the French have possession of the field. The closing scene presents the Maid, wounded and dying, supported by the king and the Duke of Burgundy, followed by Agnes Sorel, — officers and soldiers filling the background. A moment before her death her consciousness returns; she recognizes the king and her own people, and calls for her banner.

“Without my banner I may not appear before my Master; it was intrusted to me by him; I must lay it down before his throne. I dare show it, for I have been true to it. See ye the rainbow in the air? Heaven opens its golden gates! I see her [the Virgin], splendid amid the angelic choir, holding the eternal Son to her breast; she smiles, and stretches her arms towards me.

“I come! I come! on clouds upborne I rise;  
To winged robes are changed the martial weeds.  
Aloft, aloft! the earth beneath me lies.  
The pain was short, — eternal joy succeeds!”

The most finished of Schiller's dramas is “Wallenstein.” The subject had been suggested by his studies in the preparation of the historical monograph of the “Thirty Years' War.” As early as 1796 he began to work at it, but found himself, as he proceeded, disappointed in the availability and manageableness of the material. For a time he abandoned the project in despair, but resumed it again in the absence of any theme more inviting, — unwilling to lose the labor already bestowed upon it. One objection to the story of “Wallenstein” as a subject for dramatic treatment, was the preponderance of will over fate in the tragedy of Wallenstein's life. His evil end was due rather to his own character than to adverse circumstance, whereas tragedy should represent the hero contending with inevitable

fate. But the poet was reassured by the thought that the same objection applies to Macbeth.

One can easily understand that the subject must have been a difficult one to a mind like Schiller's, both on account of the historical checks which the freedom of fiction would encounter, and the absence from the stage of action of any heroic character of pure and lofty type that could kindle the moral enthusiasm, which to him was the chief source of inspiration. This defect he endeavored to supply by the introduction of Max Piccolomini, — one of the finest of his creations. On the other hand, it was an advantage to him — and he felt it to be so — that the characters he had to deal with in this undertaking were not of a kind to excite his enthusiasm: for enthusiasm was his weakness as well as his strength. He was always in danger of being mastered and carried away by his theme. Here he could keep it in due subjection, and by so doing handle it with genuine artistic skill. To Goethe he writes: —

“ You will be satisfied with the spirit in which I am working. I succeed entirely in keeping my material external to myself. The subject leaves me cold. I have never experienced such indifference to the subject-matter, combined with such interest in my task.”

The study of the historic sources — the annals of the time in which the scene is laid — was a very laborious and to his impatience very tedious task, but was conscientiously performed, although he saw fit in some particulars to swerve from historic verity. The work, begun in 1796 but interrupted by sickness and other hindrances, was not completed until the spring of 1799. The separate parts of it were put upon the stage with the best success at Weimar and Berlin. The whole was

given to the public through the press in June, 1800. An edition of thirty-five hundred copies was exhausted in two months, — a thing unexampled at that time in the case of a work of high art.

I said that “Wallenstein” is Schiller’s greatest dramatic work. I may add, it is the most finished dramatic composition, on so grand a scale, in modern time. “Faust,” of course, is a far profounder work, the product of a deeper poetic nature; but “Faust” is exceptional, incommensurable, not to be counted in any comparison of plays intended for the stage. Schiller’s drama is a trilogy, or series of plays, consisting of three members closely connected one with another, yet each by itself a perfect whole. The first, named “Wallenstein’s Camp,” introduces us to the scene of action, and exhibits in lively pictures the character of Wallenstein’s army and the state of the time, — a time when war had come to be regarded as the normal condition of society, and the soldier’s profession as the real business of life, to which all other callings are bound to contribute. Its tone is comic; its broad realism differs so widely from Schiller’s other productions, that the critics suspected Goethe’s hand. But all that Goethe did for it was to furnish the author with a sermon of Abraham a Santa Clara, which gave the cue for the preaching of the Capuchin, the chaplain of the camp, — an effective feature of the play. The piece ends with a song, which celebrates the life of the soldier, —

“ He casts away life’s cares and its gloom,  
No fear hath he and no sorrow;  
Boldly he braves a soldier’s doom, —  
It may come to-day or to-morrow.  
If not till to-morrow, to-day let us drain  
The last dear drops in life’s cup that remain.



“Heaven sends our portion: it comes with mirth,  
It comes without toil or measure,  
While the peasant wrings from the stingy earth  
A scanty, pitiful treasure.  
He plods through life a drivelling slave,  
And digs and digs, till he digs his grave.

“Why mourneth the maiden; why wringeth her hands?  
Let him go, let his memory perish!  
No home hath the soldier, he heeds no bands,  
Love's troth he may not cherish.  
Fate hurries him on an endless race,  
On earth he hath no resting-place.

“Away, then, away! leave hearts and leave homes!  
Farewell to love's caresses!  
While youth beats high and life's goblet foams  
Away, ere the foam effervesces!  
Let him who would win his life at last,  
Stake life and all on the battle's cast!”

The Second Part is called “The Piccolomini,” taking its title from the two principal characters so named, — Octavio and Max Piccolomini, — father and son, both leading officers in Wallenstein's army. The subject is the plot by which, with Wallenstein's connivance, the majority of his officers are planning to detach the army from the Emperor, and by the aid of the Swedes and the other Protestant forces to place him on the throne of Bohemia. The elder Piccolomini, who unknown to Wallenstein is attached to the Emperor and in his employ, appears to conspire with the rest, and signs their treasonable covenant, in order to win their confidence and frustrate their plans. But Max, a high-souled youth, will neither join the conspiracy against the Emperor nor side with his father against Wallenstein, whom he worships, — whom he believes incapable of

treason, and of whose daughter Thekla he is the accepted lover.

“The Piccolomini” contains many fine passages, — among them Octavio’s answer to Max’s disparagement of ancient ordinances. I give it in Coleridge’s version, — one of the few passages in which he has done justice to the original. And here let me say that Coleridge’s translation, which used to be very much praised, is in my judgment a very poor one. He has not always apprehended the meaning of the German, and where he has done so, seldom reproduces it in adequate vigorous English. But this is an exception : —

“ My son, of those old narrow ordinances  
Let us not hold too lightly. They are weights  
Of priceless worth, with which oppressed mankind  
Restrained the volatile will of their oppressors.  
For always formidable was the league  
And partnership of free power with free will.  
The way of ancient order, though it winds,  
Is yet no devious way. Straight forward goes  
The lightning’s path, and straight the fearful path  
Of the cannon ball. Direct it flies and rapid,  
Shattering that it may reach, and shattering what it reaches.  
My son, the road the human being travels,  
That on which Blessing comes and goes, doth follow  
The river’s course, the valley’s playful windings,  
Curves round the cornfield and the hill of vines,  
Honoring the holy bounds of property, —  
And thus secure, though late, leads to its goal.”

“The Piccolomini” has also that beautiful song of Thekla : —

“ Der Eichwald brauset, die Wolken ziehn,  
Das Mägdlein wandelt an Ufers grün.”

Of course, like all such things it is untranslatable, and yet I am tempted to imitate it in English : —

“ The clouds are flying, the oak-trees roar,  
The maiden is pacing the green of the shore,  
The waves are breaking with might, with might,  
And she sends forth her sighs on the darksome night,  
Her eyes with weeping beclouded.

“ My heart it is dead, and the world is drear,  
There’s nothing left me to wish for here;  
Thou Holy One, take thy child, thine own!  
The fulness of earthly delight I have known, —  
I have lived, I have loved, I have ended.”

The closing piece of the trilogy — “Wallenstein’s Death” — exhibits first his fearful struggle with himself before taking the final irrevocable step to which his previous action and the complication of events are driving him. He shudders at the abyss of treason, on whose brink he stands; but he has gone too far to retract, and so concludes the fatal compact with the Swedes, his country’s enemies. Then comes his blind trust in Octavio, founded in superstition, against the warning of the chief conspirators; and Octavio’s counterplots, by which he withdraws Isolani and Buttler, two of Wallenstein’s main dependants, and a large portion of the army from their general. A more romantic interest attaches to the fate of Max Piccolomini. Divided between his duty to the Emperor, to whom he is bound by his oath of allegiance, and his love for Thekla, who is lost to him unless he follows the fortunes of her father, in the terrible conflict which rends his soul he appeals to her decision. And she — the fairest, noblest, if not the most commanding figure in German drama — sides with his conscience, against his and her love, and her father’s fortunes. She will rather have his image pure, than himself with a taint on his name. “Go,” she says, “fulfil your

duty; be true to yourself, and you will be true to me. Fate divides us, but our hearts will be one. Bloody hate forever separates your house and mine, but we belong not to our house." And so they part. His devoted cuirassiers, fearing that Wallenstein might forcibly detain him as a hostage, surround the house in which this interview takes place. He hears the regimental band. "Blow! blow!" he says; "would it were the Swedish trumpets that are sounding, and that all the swords which I see here were plunged in my breast. You have come to tear me away? Consider what you are doing; it is not well to choose a desperate man for a leader. You *will* have me? Well, then, you have chosen your own destruction." The warning is verified. Eager for death, he soon heads an attack on the Swedes, in which he falls, and his regiment to a man is cut to pieces. Thekla, hearing of his death and learning the place of his interment, prevails on her companion, Neubrunn, to accompany her on a visit to his grave; and that is the last we hear of her. Wallenstein breaks up his camp and departs with a remnant of his army to Eger, to await the arrival of his new allies the Swedes; and there is assassinated, together with his two associates, Illo and Terzky, by the treachery of Buttler, his professed adherent and friend, who thus avenges a private grievance, while establishing, as he hopes, a claim to imperial favor and promotion.

Out of many striking passages in this the most finished, I have said, of Schiller's plays, I cite in a prose translation the one in which Wallenstein justifies his confidence in Octavio against the earnest remonstrances of Illo and Terzky, who believe him to be false and dangerous. It illustrates the superstition which formed so



controlling and so fatal an element in Wallenstein's character : —

“There are moments in the life of man when he is nearer than usual to the spirit of the Universe, and has the privilege of questioning Fate. It was such a moment when, in the night which preceded the battle of Lützen, I stood leaning against a tree and thoughtfully surveyed the plain. The camp-fires shone dim through the mist; the silence was interrupted only by the hollow clash of arms and the monotonous call of the sentinels on their round. My whole life, past and to come, at that moment presented itself to my inner vision, and my foreboding mind connected the most distant future with the event of the next day. And I said to myself, ‘So many are subject to thy command; they follow thy stars, they stake their all, as on a lucky number, on thy single head, and have embarked in the vessel which bears thy fortunes. But the day will come when Fate shall scatter them. But few will remain faithful to you. I desire to know who of all whom this camp contains is most to be trusted. Give me a token, Fate! Let it be he who in the morning shall first meet me with a sign of love.’ Thus thinking, I fell asleep. And in spirit I was borne into the midst of the battle. Great was the press. My horse was killed beneath me. I fell, and over me leaped indifferently horse and rider. Panting, I lay as one dying, trodden by the stroke of their hoofs. Then suddenly an arm seized me; it was Octavio’s, and immediately I awoke. It was day, and Octavio stood before me. ‘My brother,’ said he, ‘ride not the roan to-day as usual. Mount rather this safer beast, which I have selected for you. Do it for love of me; I have been warned by a dream.’ And that horse’s fleetness saved me when pursued by Bannier’s dragoons. My cousin rode the roan that day, and horse and rider I never saw again.”

*Illo.* That was an accident.

*Wall.* There is no accident. What seems to us blind chance, precisely that has the deepest origin. I have it under sign and seal that he [Octavio] is my good angel. And now not a word more.

And not a word more was said, for Wallenstein was not a person to be contradicted. But when it transpired that Octavio had after all betrayed him, Terzky dared to reproach him for his superstitious trust, — “Oh, had you believed me! You see now how the stars have lied to you!” Wallenstein replies : —

“The stars lie not; but this has happened in spite of stars and fate. A false heart causes the veracious heavens to deceive. Prophecy presupposes truth, but when Nature breaks bounds, all science is at fault.”

The remaining dramas are “Mary Stuart,” “The Bride of Messina,” and “William Tell.” “Mary Stuart” far excels “Wallenstein” in scenic effects, but falls as far below it in philosophic and, as it seems to me, in poetic interest. It has not so many spirited passages as “Wallenstein,” or “The Jungfrau von Orleans;” but one of surpassing beauty is the first scene of the third act, where, in the park of Fotheringay, Mary invokes the clouds that are flying southward in the direction of her beloved France : —

“Eilende Wolken Segler der Lüfte,  
Wer mit euch wanderte, wer mit euch schiffte!  
Grüsset nur freundlich mein Jugendland!”

“Ye hurrying clouds, voyagers of the air,  
Oh, that I could rove and sail with you!  
Bear a friend’s greeting to the land of my youth!”

“The Bride of Messina” is a dramatic poem, having for its subject the rivalry of two brothers, both lovers of the same maiden, who turns out to be their sister. Before the discovery of this relation, one brother in a fit of jealousy kills the other, and after the discovery, in the anguish of his remorse, kills himself. In this composition Schiller attempted to revive the chorus of the

ancient drama, — successfully, as it regards the reader, thanks to the exquisite beauty of the choral passages; not so successfully, as it regards stage-effect. “The Bride of Messina” has never been one of the stock-pieces of the German theatre. With actors of a high order, and a very refined and cultivated audience, it may still please; but its lyric and unspectacular character, like that of “Samson Agonistes,” unfits it for ordinary dramatic use. As a poem, like “Samson Agonistes,” it must always hold a high rank.

Schiller’s last important work was his dramatization of the story of “William Tell,” in those days still regarded as historical. Goethe, in his last visit to Switzerland in 1797, conceived the project of an epic founded on the same theme, but soon discovered its unfitness for that purpose. Schiller discerned its dramatic capabilities, and Goethe, when apprised of his intention to give it that form, turned over to him his notes of Swiss scenery and other matters of local interest. With the aid of these, of Tscudi’s history, and other sources, Schiller, who never saw Switzerland, succeeded wonderfully in catching the spirit of Swiss life and reproducing it in his drama. The opening scene transports us at once to the Lake of Lucerne, into the heart of the Four Cantons. We hear the Ranz de Vaches, and before the actors appear on the stage, the stage itself with the *genius loci*, on which so much depends, are brought vividly before us. The piece has less substance, and it seems to me less merit, than most of Schiller’s later plays. The characterization is feeble, the fable thin; the action after the death of Gessler drags. The greater part of the fifth act is superfluous; the murder of Albert by Johannes

Paricida introduces a distinct and foreign interest. The play really ends with the destruction of Zwing-Uri, the stronghold of despotism. One would say that that scene, which begins the fifth, should have been added to the fourth act and have formed the conclusion of the piece. On the whole, "William Tell" owes its success, I judge, to its scenic presentments, to its Swiss atmosphere, to our sympathy with the cause of liberty, rather than to those higher merits which distinguish the author's best works.

Schiller is not only Germany's greatest dramatist, he is also one of her foremost lyrists. In his lyric poems, arranged in three periods, we trace a marvellous progress from the laboring tumid style, the pompous diction, the puerile extravagance of the first period, to the ease and finished grace of the third. In the earlier pieces the poet's young enthusiasm expresses itself often in monstrous hyperbole. Thus, in the poem entitled "Laura at the Pianoforte," he assures the young lady to whom this poem, with several others, is addressed, that the winds are reverentially hushed, and that Nature pauses in her eternal course to hear her performance; also, that harmonies swarm from the chords she touches like newborn seraphim from their heavens; moreover, that the magic tones she elicits stream forth as suns, which, roused into being by the storm of creation, and escaped from the giant arm of chaos, rush sparkling out of night. Whether the worthy bookseller's daughter, Miss Margaret Schwan, the supposed original of Laura, accepted these statements as being a correct account of her playing, we are not informed; we only know that she did not accept the offer of the author's hand.



The best known of Schiller's lyric poems are the ballads, "The Ring of Polykrates," "The Diver," "Hero and Leander," "Ritter Toggenburg," "Fridolin," and others, — all products of the third period, whose superlative excellence needs no praise. Of these the "Ritter Toggenburg" is esteemed by German critics the most poetic. I have endeavored in the following version to catch the tone, but no version can do justice to the exquisite simplicity of the original : —

#### THE RITTER TOGGENBURG.

" Knight! the love we owe a brother  
I to thee may give, —  
Sister's love: demand no other,  
For it makes me grieve.  
All thy coming and thy going  
Tranquil I would see,  
Nor with silent grief o'erflowing,  
Meaningless to me."

Hears the knight with anguish smarting,  
Dares no longer stay,  
With a wild embrace at parting  
Tears himself away.  
At his summons round him rally  
All his Switzer-band;  
With the cross bedeckt they sally  
To the Holy Land.

There great deeds and valor glorious  
Prove a hero's arm,  
And his plume, it waves victorious  
Where the foemen swarm.  
And the Toggenburger's daring  
Awes the Saracen;  
But the wound, his bosom tearing,  
Will not heal again.

He has borne a year of sorrow,  
He can bear no more;  
Peace from war he may not borrow,  
Quits the Paynim shore.  
Sees a ship with canvas swelling,  
Hard by Joppa's strand;  
Seeks the air that fans her dwelling,  
Air her breath has fanned.

To her hall the pilgrim hies him,  
Knocketh at her gate.  
Thunder-tidings there apprise him  
He has come too late.  
"She you seek is consecrated  
All with veil and vows;  
Yesterday with God was mated,  
Now is Heaven's spouse."

Then the knight renounced forever  
Castle, sword, and spear,  
Saw his unused armor never  
Nor his steed so dear.  
From the Toggenburg he wended  
Pilgriming unknown;  
Limbs that once with steel were splendid  
Now the haircloth own.

Henceforth, lost to war and glory,  
He has built his home  
Where amid the lindens hoary  
Shines the convent's dome.  
There he sat when morn was beaming,  
Sat till close of day,  
Eyes with glad expectance gleaming,  
Watched he there away.

Looked to where the convent glistened  
Ancient trees among,  
Toward her casement looked and listened  
Till the casement swung;

Till the loved one he discovered,  
Till her image mild  
Bending o'er the valley hovered,  
On the valley smiled.

Solaced then, nor further wooing,  
Rested through the night,  
Trusting that the day ensuing  
Should renew the sight.  
Every other hope resigning,  
While the years went round,  
Still he waited unrepining  
For the casement's sound.

Till the loved one he discovered,  
Till her image mild  
Bending o'er the valley hovered,  
On the valley smiled.  
Thus one morning found him lying  
Cold in death's embrace;  
Toward her casement still, in dying,  
Gazed the tranquil face.

Of higher import than the ballads, foremost and grandest of all Schiller's poems, familiar to most of us through Retzsch's Outlines, is "The Song of the Bell," — a jewel of great price, which any language might covet and any poet be proud to place in his crown of fame; a poem which embraces in one symbol the stated aspects of our common humanity, and sings the song of fate to the chorus of industry.

Of Schiller's external history there is little to be said in addition to the facts already named. The last six years of his life, with the exception of portions of the summer, were spent in Weimar. In 1802 he received, through the mediation of the grand duke, from the

German emperor, Francis II., the diploma of nobility, which, though it could add nothing to his fame, changed essentially his civil status. In no Christian country has the difference between commoner and noble been more marked than it was in Germany at that time. The preposition *von*, or the letter *v.*, prefixed to a man's patronym, was a talisman which opened to the bearer a charmed circle, closed to all beside. Schiller cared little for it on his own account, but accepted it gladly for the sake of his family, to whom it was important, in a place like Weimar, to have access to everything in the way of social entertainment which the place might afford. The National Convention of France had already, in 1792, voted him *Citoyen Français*, — in their estimation the highest title in the heraldry of nations. It was probably a reminiscence of the "Robbers" that procured him that undesired honor. The record described him as "*le sieur Gille, publiciste allemand.*"

Schiller's health, so often invaded by long fits of disabling sickness, received its final blow in the spring of 1805. On the 6th of May he took to his bed, from which he rose no more. On the evening of the 7th, after a short conversation on the subject of tragedy, with his sister-in-law, he dozed, and was heard to mutter in his sleep, "Is that your heaven? Is that your hell?" The next day the power of speech was nearly gone. "Brighter and brighter" were his last intelligible words, in answer to a question how it was with him. On the 9th he died. A kiss received by his wife, as she bent over his pillow, was the last sign he gave of conscious life. Soon after, an electric shock seemed to pass over his features, followed by an expression as of one transfigured and translated.



On the night of the 11th of May his mortal remains, attended by few followers, were borne to the cemetery of the church of Saint James, from whence, after a lapse of twenty-two years, through the efforts of Ludwig, King of Bavaria, they were transferred to the ducal vault, where they now rest beside those of Karl August and of Goethe.

Goethe lay dangerously ill at the time of Schiller's death. His family feared to communicate the tidings; he read unusual concern in their looks. "I perceive," he said, "that Schiller must be very sick." To a lady friend the next day he said, inquiringly, "Schiller was very ill yesterday, was he not?" She burst into tears. "Is he dead?" he asked. "You have said it," she replied; "he is dead." "He is dead!" repeated Goethe, and covered his face with his hands.

On the 11th of August, in the same year, a memorial service was held in honor of the deceased, in the theatre at Lauchstedt. "The Song of The Bell" was presented with great pomp, and was followed by an epilogue in which Goethe celebrates with glowing verse the praises of his brother poet. Ten years later the performance was repeated with some alterations, and the epilogue, as then delivered, is preserved in the full collection of Goethe's works. I give the last two stanzas in Clarke's translation: —

"Many there were who while he dwelt on earth  
Hardly due honor to his powers would pay,  
But now are overshadowed by his worth,  
And willing subjects to his magic lay.  
Up to the Highest borne, a second birth  
Links him with all the best that's passed away.  
Then honor him! What life but poorly gave,  
An after-world shall heap upon his grave.

“ Thus he remains with us, remains though gone,  
    Though ten years since he vanished from our side!  
Yet all by him first taught, by him made known,  
    The world receives with joy, and we with pride;  
And long ago that which was most his own  
    Has passed through countless hearts in circle wide.  
So like a comet vanishing away,  
    Th’ eternal light he blends with his own ray.”

## CHAPTER XVII.

JEAN PAUL.

A FAMILIAR distinction in literary character is that of personal and impersonal, — of authors who exhibit themselves in their writings, and authors who are hidden in their theme. Of the former class, we have among the ancients a marked example in Plutarch; among the moderns, in Montaigne, in Sir Thomas Browne, in Laurence Sterne; and quite recently, in Thomas Carlyle.

To this class belongs pre-eminently the German humorist Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, — commonly known as Jean Paul, — one of the most popular writers of his day; and though now little read, still ranked as a classic by his countrymen. His unconventional peculiarities of style gave rise to the sobriquet, *der Einzige*, — “the unique,” the only. A style it is in which comic and tragic sublimity and drollery, gorgeous fancies and grotesque conceits, blend in wild confusion. His works are labyrinths, in which the main theme is continually losing itself in irrelevant episodes, — sometimes entertaining, often wearying, always distracting. His dominant principle in composition seems to have been to omit nothing, to work in somehow, to lug in somewhere, all that he had ever read or thought of, — a habit incompatible with artistic excellence. Art requires sacrifice, suppression of what is superfluous and irrelevant, in favor of

a well-proportioned, consecutive whole. Jean Paul would sacrifice nothing. Whatever fancy suggested, must go into his writing. Hence, the writing is often deformed by superfluous, however ingenious, conceits,—as a beautiful hand is deformed by superabundant rings.

But with all this deduction, and in spite of these defects, Jean Paul is a writer of a very high order, if not of the highest,—nay, a true poet in all but the technics of poetry. In subtlety of thought, in philosophic insight, in nice observation, in loving sympathy with nature, in sensuous imagination, in richness of fancy, in sublimity of vision, he is second to none of his countrymen. Few writings yield to the collector so rich a harvest of memorable sayings, beautiful images, portable wisdom. Few authors have climbed to literary eminence by rougher ways and with heavier impediments; and none ever manifested a more persistent heroism in that pursuit. His early life was a long and doubtful struggle with mean conditions and abject poverty,—a struggle for existence as well as fame. Bread he could have as a teacher; but he knew his vocation, and persisted to write and to starve. He conquered at last, and looking back on those trial-years could see a blessing in the bruises and pinches of adverse fortune; could see that “wealth bears heavier on talent than poverty.” “Under gold mountains and thrones who knows how many a spiritual giant may lie crushed down and buried.”

What we know of Jean Paul’s history comes to us partly from his autobiography, extending to his thirteenth year, in the whimsical form of lectures by a professor, and partly from biographical notices and the redaction of his correspondence by his friend Otto, and his nephew Dr. Richard Otto Spazier.



The device of constituting himself professor of his own life-history is due, I think, to a very active though very innocent egoism; seeking in this disguise a freedom of self-portraiture which a more direct method would not allow. He would seem to view himself objectively, to handle his case as it were that of another, — a feat of which Jean Paul, of all men, was least capable. In strict consistency with his assumed position of lecturer, he should have spoken of himself in the third person; but that was impossible to him. He cannot sufficiently separate himself from himself, and so, like other autobiographers, he makes use of the first.

The professor gives as the date of his birth the 21st of March, 1763. He pleases himself with the thought that he and the spring were born together. No man had a better right to call the spring his foster-brother. No one ever studied its aspects more lovingly, or hailed the annual visitant with deeper emotion.

Jean Paul's birthplace was Wonsiedel, a Bavarian village in the Fichtelgebirge. His father, Johann Christian Christoph, teacher and organist, was the son of Johann Richter, rector of a school in Neustadt, of whom, says the author, nothing is known but his extreme poverty and piety. Living on bread and beer, dividing his blameless days between praying and teaching, he reached the age of seventy-six, when "doubtless," says Paul, "through his higher connections, he was promoted to a place in the churchyard, — the Neustadt God's acre." He continues: —

"On his way thither, — that is, on his death-bed, — his son's family went to visit him. 'Let the aged Jacob,' said an attendant clergyman, 'lay his hand on the young child and bless him.' Accordingly, the infant professor was handed to the old man

for his benediction. . . . Pious grandfather ! often have I thought of thy hand laid upon me, as it grew chill in death, when Fate has led me out of dark hours into brighter ; and I dare hold fast my faith in the efficacy of thy blessing, in a world pervaded, governed, and quickened by spirits."

Our poet's father studied theology, and was miserably poor of course. Half his life had elapsed before he obtained a living ; meanwhile, his extraordinary talent for music, which the professor thinks was his true vocation, had procured for him the post of organist. He held at the same time the office of *Tertius*, — that is, teacher of the third form in descending order, in the gymnasium of the town.

In 1765 he was called to the pastorate of Joditz, and in that little village were passed the years of Paul's boyhood. A small country village, scarcely more than a hamlet, set in a lone nook of that same Fichtelgebirge, — one of those secluded spots which challenge your wonder, by what accident a human settlement could ever have sprung up in it. This out-of-the-way corner the professor calls his spiritual birthplace. He rejoices that his lot was cast in a rural one, and cautions every poet against letting himself be born in a city, — the conditions of city life being, as he thinks, unfriendly to the Muse. The warning, unfortunately, came too late for Dante, Milton, and Goethe, who ignorantly chose large cities for their birthplaces.

The reminiscences of this Joditz period, extending to the author's thirteenth year, are doubly characteristic. The idiosyncrasies of the man appear in the sort of impressions recorded ; the peculiarities of the writer, in the style of the record. The narrow economy of a German country parson ; the single room for meals and study ;

the table, contrived a double debt to pay, — writing-table and family-board ; the rare and cheap delicacy from the neighboring city, through the express-woman, who trudged back and forth on foot with the heavy basket on her back ; the delight of the first *A B C* book, with its gilt covers ; the village school, where the first thing the loving soul did was to fall in love with all the inmates, and especially the teacher ; subsequent instruction at home ; the weary hours spent over the Latin grammar, which had to be memorized, relieved in one instance by the indeclinable *cornu*, but aggravated by the exceptions to the third declension ; the occasional holiday when the father was absent on a journey ; the joy of summer hours ; the annual visit to the Fair and the maternal grandparents at Hof ; the windfalls from the muscateller pear-tree ; his first love, a pock-marked peasant girl, whom he wooed with raisins, spending his sole groschen in the offering, — these, and other experiences of the author's childhood,

“The smiles, the tears,  
Of boyhood's years,”

live again in the quaint presentation of the biographical lecture, and charm us with a charm which belongs to the reflection rather than the reality.

Some mental experiences the author evokes from the twilight of this first decade of his earthly existence, which deserve special notice. One is the birth of self-consciousness, a distinct recollection of the moment when he first appropriated to himself the full significance of the pronoun *I*. He says:—

“Never shall I forget what as yet I have told to no one, — a mental transaction whereby I assisted at the birth of my self-consciousness. I am able to name the place and the time. On

a forenoon, while yet a very young child, I was standing in the doorway of our house and looking toward the woodyard, when all at once the internal vision 'I am an *I*' rushed upon me like a flash from heaven, and since then has remained luminously persistent. Then for the first time my *I* had seen itself, and forever."

The other experience is that mysterious fear of the supernatural, which seems in the case of Jean Paul to have exercised an exceptional sway. Why is it that most children are afraid of the dark; and in the dark, of precisely that which confessedly has least power to harm,—the immaterial? Hear the lecturer's confession. The children were sent to bed in the winter evenings at nine o'clock. Little Paul was his father's bedfellow:—

"Until he [the father] below had finished his two-hours' night-reading, I was lying upstairs with my head under the bed-clothes, in the perspiration of ghostly fear, and was seeing in the dark the heat-lightning of the cloudy spirit-sky; and it seemed to me as if man himself were enmeshed by spirit-caterpillars. Thus every night I suffered helplessly for two hours, until at last my father came up, and like a morning sun chased away the ghosts as it were dreams."

Even in broad day he was sometimes assailed by these ghostly terrors. When there was a funeral, he had to fetch the father's Bible from the church into the sacristy. Courageously enough he "went on the gallop through the dim, dumb, listening church into the narrow sacristy; but [on the return] who of us can picture to himself the trembling, shuddering leaps which I made in my flight from the pursuing ghosts close on my back, and the horror with which I bolted through the church gate? And if one pictures it, who will not laugh?"

At the same time, he tells us, he was brave enough as to physical dangers,—thunder-storms, a run-away



horse, anything visible, tangible ; braver than boys who were inaccessible to ghostly terrors. This he ascribes to lack of imagination on their part, and excess of it on his.

Extreme sensibility, venting itself in copious tears, — a constitutional peculiarity of Jean Paul, — appears in this record of his early life. On one occasion, during his father's absence, he seizes a hymn-book and rushes to the cottage of a poor, decrepit, bed-ridden old woman, selects such hymns as he deems appropriate to her condition, and begins to read to her, but is soon obliged to desist, choked by his own tears and sobs, she the while philosophically indifferent.

Altogether, it was a lachrymose age in German life. Klopstock's "Messiah," whatever its other defects, is redeemed from the charge of dryness by its superabundant weepings. Herder was not "unused to the melting mood ;" and when he and Jean Paul met, they flowed together like twin streams. Was it self-satire in the "Flegeljahre," where Walt, who is supposed to represent Jean Paul's own youth, having met in his walk a celebrated author, and been kindly noticed by him, comes home suffused with tears ? "What ails you, my boy ?" "Oh, father, I have met a great man." The prosaic father, who knows no greatness but size, — "Did he lick you, then ?"

The poetic feeling which pervades the author's writings was early developed in the boy, when returning on a summer's afternoon from an errand at Hof, the sunlit slopes of the mountains, and the moving billows of the cornfields, and the flying shadows of the clouds, awakened in him an objectless yearning, — part joy, part pain. "Alas !" he says, "it was the entire man

longing after the heavenly goods of life which lay yet undefined and colorless in the deep, wide dark of the heart, and caught a momentary illumination from the streaks of sunlight which fell upon them."

Equally characteristic was his early love of music, to which through life he was passionately addicted, and in which he was no mean proficient. At the fair in Hof he heard for the first time a military band, with drum, fife, and cymbal. It produced "in me, who was always longing after musical tones, a real intoxication of the ear. I heard, as the drunken man sees, everything double and flying." He continues : —

"I have often endeavored at night, before dropping asleep, — a time when imagination most readily gets hold of the keyboard of departed sounds, — to hear it again. And how blest I am when I do hear it! — so inwardly blest, as if my old childhood, like a Tithon, become immortal, reappeared, and conversed with me in those tones. Ah, light, thin, invisible sounds! They bear and harbor whole worlds for the heart. They are as souls to our soul. . . . In the dark depths of the lowest bass roll the waves of time past and gone, while, on the contrary, the sharpness of the highest treble cuts screaming into the future, or summons it before us."

With the Joditz pastorate, from which in 1776 his father was promoted to that of Schwarzenbach-on-the-Saale, end the idyls of Richter's boyhood, and the autobiographical lectures, with which, as self-appointed professor, he had undertaken the story of his life. The richer living on which his father had entered was insufficient to cancel the debts he had rashly contracted, in the hope of pecuniary aid from his father-in-law, whose means he had greatly overrated. Health failed, and with failing health came melancholy, even moroseness, —

disturbing the peace of the family, and casting the first shadow which darkened the life of his son.

At the age of eighteen Paul was placed at the gymnasium in the little town of Hof, and two years later entered the University of Leipsic, where he was matriculated as student of theology. His father meanwhile had died, bequeathing a precious memory and a load of debt, which his widow — soon doubly bereaved in the loss of her own parents — was unable to bear. It follows that the son, besides a fair preparation and extraordinary ability and good-will, brought nothing to Leipsic but an unexceptionable *testimonium paupertatis*, which it was hoped would procure him free tuition and a free table. Admission without pay to several courses of lectures, on the strength of this certificate, he readily obtained; but free board was not provided. Nor did he succeed in obtaining private pupils, by which means he had hoped to defray in part the expenses of his college course. To all inquiry after such, the answer was, *Lipsia vult expectari*, — “in Leipsic one must wait for what may turn up.” He had matriculated as a student of theology with a vague impression that he behooved to follow in his father’s steps; but, as in the case of Lessing, his interest in that study as a *brodstudium* — “a means of livelihood” — soon gave way to the stronger attraction of general literature. As a matter of duty he attended the lectures of Morus on Biblical interpretation, and he listened with delight to Platner, then incumbent of the chair of philosophy, of whom he wrote enthusiastically to his friends. For the rest, he occupied himself chiefly with English and French writers, and with his own compositions, having settled with himself that authorship was his true vocation.

Meanwhile the family at home in Hof had been sinking deeper and deeper into helpless, hopeless poverty, until finally the means for Paul's maintenance at Leipsic failed utterly, and he was forced, with unpaid bills for board, to quit the University, and to share the destitution of the wretched lodge to which his mother had been reduced,—there, if possible, to earn something by his writing, for her and his brother's support.

He was not in those years a favorite in Hof. Apart from the disgrace—for such it was considered—of the fallen fortunes of the Richter family, the youth had rendered himself obnoxious to public sentiment by odd behavior, especially in the matter of dress, in which he had dared to affront the conventional requirements of his time. To avoid the expense of the hair-dresser,—a serious tax in those days of queues, curls, and powder,—and the tedium of the daily *frisure*, he had had his hair cropped, and presented himself in that guise to the censuring gaze of a frizzed and queued generation. For similar reasons of economy and convenience, he had thrown away necktie and waistcoat, exposing his uncovered throat and chest. What favor or aid could such indecency expect from grave, cravated, and buttoned-up burghers? No man may, in externals, offend with impunity the taste of his time. Paul seems to have discovered at last that making enemies was not the way to succeed in life,—that the having his own way was hardly worth the fighting which it cost to maintain it. Any way, he wearied of his singularity, and announced in a circular sent to his friends his intention of returning, as to head-dress at least, to the ways of the world. Here is Carlyle's excellent rendering of this well-known and characteristic document:—



*"Advertisement."*

"The undersigned begs to give notice, that, whereas cropped hair has as many enemies as red hair, and said enemies of the hair are enemies likewise of the person it grows on; whereas, further, such a fashion is in no respect Christian, since otherwise Christian persons would practise it; and whereas, especially, the undersigned has suffered no less from his hair than Absalom did from his, although on contrary grounds; and whereas, it has been notified that the public purposed to send him to his grave, since the hair grows there without scissors, — he hereby gives notice that he will not push matters to such extremity. Be it known, therefore, to the nobility, gentry, and a discerning public in general, that the undersigned proposes on Sunday next to appear in various important streets [of Hof] with a short false queue; and with this queue, as with a magnet and cord-of-love and magic-rod, to possess himself forcibly of the affections of all and sundry, be they who they may."

Before leaving Leipsic, Richter had made, at the age of twenty, his first literary venture, — a volume of satirical sketches with the title "Greenland Lawsuits" (*Grönländische Prozesse*). Refused by the booksellers of Leipsic, it was accepted and published by Voss in Berlin, who gave the author fifty odd dollars for his work. A second series of these satires brought him from the same publisher double the sum. But the book did not sell, and a third series was declined. The extracts from the "Devil's Papers" and the "Diversions beneath the Skull of a Giantess" met with no better fate. Ten years elapsed before the brave scholar, who had wedded himself to literature for better or worse and still persisted to write, again produced a book which put money in his purse. His mother, the minister's widow, — who esteemed the preacher's work the greatest in the world, —

elated by the money received for that first publication, thought that her son who could write a book might with diligence also attain to writing even sermons, and she endeavored to lead his ambition in that direction. "Sermons!" quoth Paul; "do you think it such a great thing to write sermons? I could write one in my sleep. But a book like that, — do you suppose there is a minister in Hof who could even understand, to say nothing of writing, it?"

Sad years they were for Richter, sad and hungry years, which followed his return from the University. Laboring in his mother's cottage, in the one room which served for parlor, kitchen, and study, — laboring amid the din of household operations, fasting often, with seldom a full meal, he fought the hard fight with want and neglect, never, at the worst, losing faith in his final success.

In 1790, having first tried private tutoring at Topen with unpleasant results, and declining new offers in that line, he removed to Schwarzenbach, a town about five miles from Hof, to take charge of a school which had been gathered for him, consisting mostly of the children of his friends. Before starting, he was forced to borrow money of his friend Otto to replenish his wardrobe. He had taken an inventory, he said, of his property, feudal and allodial; it read thus: "boots, stockings, handkerchiefs, and two copper coins;" but in this list numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 were wanting.

His school was managed on the principle of avoiding all that had been amiss and painful in his own education; no lumbering of the memory, but much cultivating of the perceptive faculty, and much eliciting of original thought. The plan is given in the "*Levana*," — his

essay on education. He kept a note-book of the sayings of his pupils, whose ages ranged from seven to fifteen. Some of them are quite remarkable, and remind one who has read it of the Record of a School taught by Mr. Alcott, in Boston, some forty years since.

But now the poet's trial-years of want and pecuniary distress were to end, and a new day to dawn upon his lot. Weak natures are soured by adversity ; strong ones, like Richter's, are exalted and ennobled by it. He abandoned satire, for which he had talent indeed, but no moral vocation. Hard experience and better knowledge of human kind had softened his temper, refined his feelings, enlarged his views, and deepened his sense of the meaning of life. By such discipline he was led to write stories, which, while they embodied the results of his observation, embodied also his moral convictions and aspirations, and brought to light the deep poetry and heroism of his nature.

The turning-point in his fortunes was a novel, designed to represent the influence on different natures of certain modes of education, — a work which has been likened to Rousseau's "Émil," entitled, with but faint relation to the contents, *Die unsichtbare Loge*, — "The Invisible Lodge ; or Box in a Theatre," as if one should say "Life seen by an Invisible Spectator." The manuscript of this he sent, by a happy instinct, to Hofrath Moritz in Berlin, a man known to him only as the author of a work in which Richter discerned, as he thought, a kindred spirit. It is not a very welcome missive to a busy man, — a bulky manuscript volume from an unknown person, accompanied with the request that you will read it.

Moritz was tempted to do as most men would have done, — to find some pretext for declining the task ; but

glancing at the first page, he was so impressed with the quaint original style that he read on and still on, saying to himself as he read, "Why, this beats Wieland, — it beats Goethe! Who can the author be?" For Richter had not given his name, but a pseudonym. The end of it was a letter to the prescribed address at Hof, in which the writer poured forth his enthusiasm without stint:

"If you were at the end of the earth, I would fly into your arms, though I should encounter a hundred tempests to get to you. Where do you live? What is your name? Who are you? Your work is a jewel! I shall know no rest until its author reveals himself more fully."

And the author did reveal himself. In his previous works he had written anonymously; but now he took the thenceforth famous name of Jean Paul.

No happier moment "in all his noon of fame" would Jean Paul know than that in which he poured into his worn mother's lap a handful of gold, — the first instalment of the hundred ducats which the publisher gave for "The Invisible Lodge."

His next work, "Hesperus," which appeared in 1794, not only deepened the impression which "The Invisible Lodge" had made on the few whom it reached, but greatly extended the circle of his readers and admirers, in fact, conquered to itself the reading public of Germany, and lifted its author at once to a seat in the literary pantheon of his nation.

The pay, in cash, which the author received from the publisher for even the "Hesperus" was paltry; but the moral compensation was all and more than he could reasonably expect. Rarely has a writer passed so suddenly from deep obscurity into broad refulgent day.



Letters from all parts of the land, and from all sorts of persons, rich and poor, high and low, were poured in upon him, all gushing with gratitude, admiration, joy ; needy schoolmasters, in retired villages, begging but for the loan of one of his books ; ladies of distinction, like Sophie La Roche, soliciting his friendship ; occasionally one charged with more substantial demonstrations of good-will ; among others an anonymous one, afterwards known to be from old Gleim in Halberstadt, himself an author, and addicted to poetry not of the very best, more illustrious by his generous patronage of genius struggling with poverty than by his verses, which however have survived. The letter was accompanied by a gift of fifty dollars, — equal to two hundred of our more abundant and more luxurious times. The giver signed himself, borrowing a name from one of Jean Paul's heroes, Septimus<sup>1</sup> Fixlein. He wrote : —

SCHERAU, May 23, 1796.

You are said to be poor, dear Herr Richter, — you, an intellectual millionaire. Such millionnaires are commonly poor, and it is well that they are so, for the other sort write no books ; therefore I suppose it to be your case. And because your books give me pleasure, — much pleasure, and nothing but pleasure, — I consider it my duty, dear Herr Richter, to give you also a little pleasure by showing you that your readers are grateful. They are all grateful, but most of them cannot show their gratitude. And that too is all right ; else, dear Herr Richter, you would be rich, and would write no more books. The greetings of a grateful one to your Christian and your Clotilde [characters portrayed by Jean Paul], and be you as magnanimous as he is grateful.

Your most devoted servant.

SEPTIMUS FIXLEIN.

<sup>1</sup> It should have been Quintus.

A nature less firm and right principled than Richter's might have been intoxicated and thrown from its balance by these unexpected and enthusiastic demonstrations of popularity, which seemed to place him in the fore-front of the literary world of his time. In particular, the advances of sentimental women, who courted his acquaintance, would have proved dangerous to a man whose ideal of womanhood was less exalted, and whose moral purity was less assured, and who did not, with great susceptibility to feminine attractions and feminine influence, unite a maidenly soul. The urgent attentions of Madam von Kalb, a lady of culture and rank, practically but not legally divorced from a husband who slighted her, might have been interpreted as inviting a *liaison*; the rather that her frankly avowed principles were not averse to such connections. From Richter they elicited only admiration of her gifts, and gratitude for the aid which she rendered him in becoming acquainted with the celebrities of Weimar, where he spent three weeks of ecstatic enjoyment. There, at length, he met Herder, for whom his soul had yearned so long, and who remained to the last the Jupiter of his pantheon, as Herder's noble wife was its Juno. There he met Goethe, of whom he wrote to his friend Otto that "his eyes were flames," and his reading "but a deeper sort of thunder, with soft rain-whisper between."

Altogether, there seems to have been something magical, inexplicable, daemonic in the fascination which Richter unintentionally exercised upon women. Attracted to him in the first instance by his writings, they sought his correspondence, craved his acquaintance, and when they encountered him face to face were ready captives to the charm of his voice, and to that smile which Madam von

Kalb forbade as being quite too dangerous. Social rank in Germany, at that time so despotic, was not so much waived as forgotten in his favor. Baroness Krüdener, afterward famous as a pietist and revivalist, sought him out in his lowly lodgings in Hof. Josephine von Sydon, an unknown worshipper, invites him to Berlin. With Fräulein von F. he is on the point of betrothal, when a sudden scruple on his part intervenes. Emilie von Berlepsch, who begins with Platonic attachment, loving him more, she says, with the fancy than with the heart, ends with hæmoptisis and swooning because he does not love her well enough to marry her, which in pity he finally resolves to do, — but after all, stops on the verge of the sacrifice, still however retaining her friendship, having somehow satisfied her that their union could not be a happy one. Poor Maria Forster went mad for love of him, and not allowed to visit him, drowned herself in the Rhine.<sup>1</sup>

In Berlin, — whither he went in 1800, and where his fame preceding him procured for the literary lion of the day admission into all the best circles, both literary and courtly; where the Queen of Prussia, the beautiful and unfortunate Luise, invited him to dinner at Sans Souci, — in Berlin the tumult which he raised among feminine admirers may be inferred from a casual remark in a letter to his friend Otto, in which he says that so much of his hair has been begged of him, that if he were disposed to trade in it he could make as much money by the outside of his head as by the inside. Embarrassing such adoration must have been, seeing that the man at the age of thirty-seven was already bald. Here in Berlin at last, after so many transient and fruitless attachments, he found the

<sup>1</sup> This was after his marriage.

woman who satisfied all his matrimonial requirements and completely filled his heart. He had often declared that he could dispense with beauty of person in a wife, but not with beauty of soul. In Caroline, daughter of the privy counsellor Maier, he found both, — a maiden well born, highly cultured but not rich, used on the contrary to make the most of small means, one who could read Plato in the original and make her own dresses and dye and turn them, when on the eve of a ball the privy counsellor's salary would not afford the expense of a new one. She was fitted, intellectually and practically, to be the wife of a genius, especially of one whose ideal was so high and whose fortunes so lowly as those of Richter. Her intelligence could sympathize with his loftiest imaginings, while her prudence and *savoir faire* were equal to all the necessities of their straitened economy.

They were wedded in private, in May of 1801, and immediately set out for Weimar. Jean Paul could not consider himself fairly married until the Herders had approved the bride and blessed the union. After trying several cities in different parts of Germany with a view to permanent residence, they finally, in 1804, fixed on Baireuth in upper Bavaria as their life-long home. Its attraction for Richter was its nearness to Hof, the abode of his dearest friends; his predilection also was for that part of the country whose features were associated with the deepest experiences of his life.

Here he spent the remainder of his days, of which nigh on two thirds had already elapsed, in peaceful activity, enjoying the reputation so bravely won and the wide acceptance of his works; enjoying still more the production of new ones. By choice Richter was an indefatigable



writer; but even if choice had not so inclined, and had not the force of genius impelled to labor, necessity would not have allowed him to rest. Pecuniary ease, material independence, he never knew. Though relieved from the pressure of actual want, no longer menaced as in early life by the wolf at the door, he was poor to the last. His literary earnings were barely sufficient for the maintenance of his family; and in the early years of the century, when Germany lay paralyzed in the grasp of Napoleon, when all trades languished, and the bookseller's business in particular was almost at a stand-still, his income as a writer would not have covered the necessary expenses of his household, had it not been supplemented by a modest pension of four hundred dollars annually, secured to him by the generosity, while in office, of Prince Dalberg, and afterward assumed by the King of Bavaria.

In 1817, on a visit to Heidelberg, he was complimented by the University of that city with the academic degree of Doctor of Philosophy. He enjoyed this as he did other distinctions,—less for the honor's sake than as proof of the esteem and good-will of his fellow-men.

Hitherto, in spite of the hardships and privations of his youth,—thanks to his buoyant spirit and strong, courageous, loving soul,—the life of Richter had been on the whole a happy one. But now, in his fifty-ninth year, a great calamity, the first immedicable sorrow of his life, befell him in the death of his only son. The youth, who inherited his father's idealism and aspirations without his robust understanding and joyous temperament, fell a victim, at the age of nineteen, to morbid conscientiousness, inducing ascetic abstention in the matter of diet, and aggravated by religious irritation. Sent

to the gymnasium at Munich at the age of seventeen, anxiety to realize his father's ambitious hopes and to spare his father's pocket, caused him to combine a maximum of mental labor with a minimum of bodily comfort. Afterward, at the University of Heidelberg, he came under the influence of Kanne and other pietists, and began to entertain extravagant notions of his own worthlessness, and to fancy that the only way to the excellence to which he aspired lay through bodily mortification. He conceived himself morally bound to equal his father as a literary genius, and attributed his inferiority in that kind to moral defects, which must be corrected by severe self-denial, while with redoubled diligence he applied himself to intellectual labor. By starving and plodding he would wring from himself what Nature had denied. He attended the lectures of Hegel, then professor of philosophy at Heidelberg, and was worried by his inability to comprehend the subtleties of that renowned dialectician, who would solve the problem of the universe by a trick of logic. This too was laid to the charge of his own worthlessness, and deepened his despair. In vain his father wrote to him to eat more and study less, and to let go Hegel, who, though confessedly the most acute of modern philosophers, was none the less "a dialectic vampire of the inner man."

Thus fretted by self-depreciation and the sense of an unattained, unattainable ideal on the one hand, and exhausted by excess of abstinence on the other, what wonder that the young man's health gave way! Once so strong and blooming, and every way promising, he came home to Baireuth for the summer holidays a wreck in body and mind, was attacked with brain fever, and after a brief illness died in September, 1821, — a signal illus-

tration of that noteworthy saying of Novalis, that "the soul is the most active of poisons."

It was a blow from the shock of which the affectionate father never recovered. It struck to the root of his life. He might possibly take to himself some blame in the matter, for had he not unwittingly prepared the way for this sacrifice by a system of education which led the too conscientious youth to suppose that the great end of life is literary eminence?

The remaining four years of Richter's life were years of labor and sorrow, although but three-score instead of the three-score-and-ten of Biblical allowance had been numbered; years not unblessed with that which should accompany old age, but overshadowed, morally and physically, with a darkness swift deepening into funereal night,—morally by grief for the loss of his beloved Max, and physically by loss of his eye-sight through excessive weeping over that loss,—tears which fixed belief in a life to come and heavenly reunion failed to check; tears which ceased not to flow while even his pen was inditing comic fancies for the entertainment of his readers. He continued to work on his unfinished novel,— "Nicholas Margraf; or, the Comet,"—and on other unfinished writings; and meanwhile began a new work, the idea of which was suggested, or recalled, by the death of his son,— a work on Immortality, his "Selina,"—of which he lived to complete but eight chapters.

In 1825 his failing eye-sight failed utterly; darkness shut down on him, made more afflictive by the wreck of his bodily health. Both calamities had been hastened by his own medical *dilettanteism*,—by optical and dietetic experimenting. Every week new glasses, new wines, new régime. His nephew, Otto Spazier, whom he had



summoned from Dresden to be his amanuensis, and to aid him in preparing a final edition of his works, finds him, the vigorous man of but five years previous, who was wont to write in the open air in winter with only a board to protect his feet from the snow, now wrapped in furs, lying on the sofa, shrunken, collapsed, physically a ruin, yet with intellect still clear, memory true, and mental vigor unabated. But the power of the spirit over the flesh in the body's downfall is limited. After a few week's labor with his young help-mate the machine gave out,—the wheel was broken at the cistern. One evening the rest to which he had betaken himself for the night passed gently into the sleep whose waking is not of this world. A lady friend had sent him a bunch of flowers, which he tenderly fingered while inhaling their perfume. They recalled the darlings of his own garden. "Oh, my beautiful flowers!" he exclaimed; they were his last words. It was the 14th of November, 1825.

His fellow-citizens vied with each other in demonstrations of respect on the night of his obsequies; the municipal authorities, headed by the royal functionary, Von Welten, followed the body to the grave. The Catholic pastor Oesterreich joined the train, in friendly concord with the Protestant clergy of the city, having himself arranged some of the ceremonies of the occasion. At his suggestion, the scholars of the gymnasium formed a part of the procession, bearing torches, and on velvet cushions copies of the author's "*Levana*" and the "*Aesthetik*." The manuscript of the unfinished "*Selina*," and beside it a laurel wreath, lay on the coffin. In the church, after select and appropriate music, instead of the customary funeral sermon, was read



the beautiful passage concerning Christ from Richter's essay on "God in History." Fitting eulogies by those who had a right to speak were spoken at the grave, the body was lowered, placed beside that of his son, and then the torches were extinguished, — fit symbol of a cherished light put out.

We may say of Richter what he said of himself, that he had made of himself all that the stuff would allow. What more can be said of the best?

As a man, Jean Paul was eminent in all the qualities which command respect and attract good-will. There was in him, and went out of him, a power of love which conquered hardness and compelled return. Never had poet more devoted friends, or reciprocated friendship with truer devotion. His friendships were not bounded by human kind; the brute creation came in for a share of his affections. He surrounded himself with dumb pets as it were the necessities of life. A favorite poodle accompanied him in all his journeyings, and must not be excluded from any house where he visited. "Love me, love my dog." His birds hopped over the page on which he was writing, he waiting the while with suspended pen and continuing patience until they should pass. A tame squirrel sat upon his shoulder in his walks about town; and once, at the christening of a friend's child, where Jean Paul was to stand god-father, having forgotten to leave the creature behind, he was obliged to put it in his pocket, and with difficulty prevented its escape with his left, while with right hand and arm he held the babe.

I have spoken of Richter's peculiarities of style, his exuberant fancy, his grotesque imagery, his wild rhetoric,

attracting or repelling, as I said, according to the taste of the reader. Noticeable in his novels is the want of method and a rational plot. We miss the progressive unfolding of a theme, the onward movement, the charm of expectation, the cumulative interest, the fit conclusion. The author writes like one who enters on a journey with no determined goal in view ; or who, having one, forgets it in adventures by the way, in the pleasant company he falls in with, and strays into endless episodes. Or, to vary the comparison, he is a dramatist who crowds his stage with characters that come and go and exhibit their peculiarities. Scene succeeds scene ; we enjoy them in turn, but by and by discover that we are not getting on, that character and scene have no relation to any central aim. We wait the *dénouement* : there is none, or a forced one, a makeshift ; and when at last the curtain falls, it is not because a definite plan has been fulfilled, but simply because the play cannot go on forever.

Jean Paul is not merely a writer of fiction, but a philosophic essayist as well. His work on education, the "Levana ;" that on the principles of literary composition, the "Vorschule der Aesthetik ;" the unfinished work on immortality, entitled "Selina," — show him a profound thinker and sagacious critic. They present a more adequate idea of the man than the "Titan," on which he supposed that his fame as an author would finally rest. These works abound in precious thoughts and luminous suggestions ; but we have to regret that in these and all his writings the style is so mannerized, so choked with verbal conceits on the one hand, so unnaturally compressed on the other, that the wealth of wisdom contained in them is lost to many, and

especially foreigners, by reason of the crabbed and deterrent rhetoric, — the dragon which guards the hidden treasure.

When I say that his philosophical writings best reveal the man, I am thinking of the serious side of his nature. But Jean Paul was a born humorist; the comic side of him is the one the most noted, if not the most characteristic. He began with satire; but for that he had no vocation, and never really prospered in it, — there wanted the vitriol in his blood, and there wanted the ice-brook's temper in his wit. Not great as a satirist, not distinguished as a wit, but in the two opposites of frolic humor and soul-subduing pathos, in comic fancy and towering grandeur of imagination, alike pre-eminent; a very Shakspeare in opulence of mind, but without the plastic cunning and without the voice of song.

Of his graver novels, the "Titan" is the most elaborate, and the one which he regarded as his masterpiece. The "Hesperus," the "Siebenkäs," the "Unsichtbare Loge" are equally good in parts, but less comprehensive in their scope and less complete in execution. Chief among the comic are the "Flegeljahre," "Quintus Fixlein," the "Life of Fibel," and "Katzenberger's Badereise."

"The Invisible Lodge" is one of the crudest of the author's works, but contains some of his most striking conceits. The hero, Gustav, in accordance with a whim of his parents, is confined in a subterranean dwelling during the first eight years of his life, in order that he may not become callous to the beauties of Nature by early use. He is to be introduced to them suddenly on his ninth birthday, which falls on the first of June, when

the earth is apparelled in its brightest raiment, that so the splendor of the universe, concealed until then, may overwhelm him with surprise and make an indelible impression. A tutor who enters heartily into the scheme, a wise educator who is called the boy's "genius," has been provided for these early years. When the time arrives, Gustav is told by his genius that he is to die and ascend to heaven,—so the world above ground is figured to him. He is prepared for his ascension by hearing for the first time a strain of music. The author exclaims:—

"O Music! echo of a far-off world of harmony! sigh of the angel within us! When language fails and the eye and embraces are denied, and our hearts lie mute and lonely behind the grating of the breast, it is thou by whose mediation they call to each other from their prisons and mingle their distant sighs in the desert. . . . As in real death, the Genius in this mock death drew his pupil toward heaven by the ladder of sense. He made the apparent death beautiful to the advantage of the actual, so that when Gustav dies it will be with a rapture unknown to us."

The chapter which describes the child's emerging into daylight is entitled "The Resurrection." It begins,—

"There are four priests who stand in the wide cathedral of Nature and sacrifice at God's altars, the hills,—ice-gray Winter with his snowy surplice; ingathering Autumn with harvests under his arm, which he lays upon the altar of God, and which man may take thence; Summer, the fiery youth who labors into the night to sacrifice; and Spring, the child, with his white church-decoration of flowers and blossoms, which, child-like, he spreads before the sublime Spirit, and whose prayers are joined in by all who hear him. For the children of men, Spring is the fairest priest.



“This flower-priest was the first whom Gustav saw at the altar. Before sunrise, on the first of June, the Genius knelt silently beside him, and prayed with his eyes and with dumb, trembling lips a prayer for Gustav, — a prayer which spread its wings over all the venture of his life. A flute above ground sounded its fond, loving call. ‘We are summoned,’ said the Genius, himself overcome, ‘we are summoned from earth to heaven. Come with me, my Gustav.’ The little one trembled with anxious joy. The flute continues to sound; they ascend the heaven’s ladder, — two anxious hearts almost bursting with their throes. The Genius pushes open the gate and places the child on the earth beneath the sky. Now the swelling billows of the living ocean break over Gustav. With halting breath, with eye oppressed, with soul overwhelmed, he stands before the immeasurable aspect of Nature, and clings trembling more closely to his Genius. But when, after the first stark amazement, he opened his mind to these instreaming floods; when he felt the thousand arms with which the sublime Soul of the universe pressed him to itself; when he was able to contemplate the green billowy flower-life around him; . . . when his uplifted eye lost itself in the deep heaven, the entrance to infinity; . . . when he saw the mountains like other earths encamped upon ours; when he saw himself encompassed by endless life, — the feathered, flying life beneath the clouds, the humming life at his feet, the golden creeping life on all the leaves, the living, beckoning arms and heads of the giant trees; when the morning wind seemed to him the mighty breath of a coming spirit; when the fluttering foliage whispered and the apple-tree tossed a cool leaf against his cheek; . . . when at last the heavens began to burn, and the trailing border of the mantle of night disappeared in the blaze, and on the rim of the earth the sun lay like the crown of God dropped from his throne, — then Gustav exclaimed, ‘There is God!’ and with dazzled eye and mind fell down upon the flowers with the greatest prayer that ever a childish bosom contained.”

VAN DER KABEL'S WILL.<sup>1</sup>

No one, since Haslau was made a royal residence, could remember anything, unless it were the birth of a crown prince, which had been looked forward to with such interest as the opening of Van der Kabel's Will.

Van der Kabel might be called the Haslau Cræsus, and his life a numismatic diversion, or a gold wash under a gold rain, or whatever else wit might choose to term it. Seven still living distant relations of seven deceased distant relations entertained indeed some hopes of a place in his testament, inasmuch as the Cræsus had sworn to them to remember them in it; but their hopes were faint, for the reason that they did not especially trust him, not only because he managed everything in such a grumblingly moral and disinterested fashion (the seven relations being still beginners in morals), but also because he had such a mocking way, and a heart so full of tricks and traps that no reliance could be placed on him. The persistent smile about his temples and his thick lips, and his sneering, piping voice weakened the good impression which might have been made by his nobly formed countenance and a pair of big hands from which fell daily New-Year's presents and benefit-plays and donations. For which reason the birds of passage represented the man — this bird-berry tree on which they fed and roosted — as a hidden snare, and could scarcely see the visible berries for the invisible hair-springes.

Between two strokes of apoplexy he had made his will, and deposited it with the magistracy. In the very act of delivering, when half dying, their certificates of deposit to the seven presumptive heirs, he said, in his old tone, that "he hoped that this token of his approaching end would not depress grave men, whom he would much rather think of as laughing heirs than as weeping ones." Only one of them — Police-Inspector Harprecht, the cold ironist — replied to this warm irony, that "probably their interest in such a loss did not depend on themselves."

<sup>1</sup> From the *Flegeljahre*.

Finally, the seven heirs appeared with their certificates at the Council-house ; namely, the Church-Counsellor Glanz, the Police-Inspector Harprecht, the Court-Agent Neupeter, the Court-Solicitor Knoll, the Bookseller Pasvogel, the Morning-Preacher Flachs, and Flitte from Alsace. They claimed the notice deposited by the late Kabel, and the regular and formal opening of the will. The chief-executor of this was the reigning burgomaster himself ; the sub-executors, the rest of the City Council. The Notice and the Testament were immediately produced, . . . shown to the assembled Councillors and heirs, for inspection of the secret city-stamp ; the registered certificates were read aloud by the city clerk to the seven heirs, who were thereby informed that the departed had actually deposited such notice with the magistracy and intrusted it to the public archives, and that on the day of the deposition he had been of sound mind. Then, finally, the seven seals which he himself had stamped upon them were inspected and found entire. Now, after the city clerk had made a record of all this, the will could, in God's name, be opened and read aloud by the reigning burgomaster, as follows : —

“ I, Von der Kabel, here in my house in Dog Street, Haslau, on the 7th May, 179—, do make my will without many million words, although I have been a German notary and a Dutch dominé.

“ Devising and disinheriting are universally regarded as the most essential parts of a will. Accordingly, I bequeath to Mr. Ecclesiastical-Councillor Glanz, Mr. Court-Solicitor Knoll, Mr. Court-Agent Peter Neupeter, Mr. Police-Director Harprecht, Mr. Morning-Preacher Flachs, Mr. Bookseller Pasvogel, and Mr. Flitte, for the present, nothing. Not because, being very distant relatives, they are entitled to no *Trebellianica*, or because most of them have enough of their own to devise, but because I know from their own lips that they esteem my poor person much more than my large estate, which person, therefore, I leave to them, however little may be got by it.”

At these words seven long faces started up like the Seven Sleepers. The ecclesiastical councillor, a young man still, but



famous in all Germany by his spoken and printed discourses, was the one who felt himself most offended by such insinuations. The Alsatian Flitte muttered a half-audible curse. The morning-preacher Flachs's chin dropped down like a beard. The City Council could hear sundry half-loud exclamations against the late Kabel, such as "scalawag," "fool," "infidel," etc. But the burgomaster Kuhnold beckoned with his hand, and while the solicitor and the bookseller set all the muscles in their faces like so many spring-traps, read on, although with forced gravity:—

"Except my present house in Dog Street, which, just as it stands, shall be adjudged and shall belong to that one of my seven above-named relatives who, within the space of half an hour, to be reckoned from the reading of this clause, shall, sooner than the other six rivals, succeed in shedding a tear or tears in the presence of an honorable magistrate, who shall make protocol thereof. But if all remain dry, then the house must also lapse to the universal heir, whom I shall immediately name."

Here the burgomaster closed the will, and remarked that the condition might be an unusual one, but was not contrary to law, and that the Court must adjudge the house to the first one who should weep. He laid his watch, which indicated half-after-eleven, on the sessions-table, and sat quietly down, in order, with the rest of the Court, as executors of the testament, to note who should first shed the desired tears for the testator.

That so long as the earth has stood and moved there was ever upon it a more troubled and perplexed congress than this of seven united dry provinces assembled for weeping, can hardly without partiality be supposed. At first, for some precious minutes, there was mere confusion, astonishment, smiles. The Congress saw itself too suddenly transported into the position of that dog which, in the midst of its fiercest onset, the enemy brought to a still stand by crying out "Watch!" and which suddenly stood on its hind legs and, snarling, watched. From cursing they were too swiftly hurried up to weep. Every



one saw that genuine emotion was out of the question ; a shower on the gallop, a hunting-baptism of the eyes, was not to be thought of. Nevertheless, in twenty-six minutes something might be accomplished.

The merchant Neupeter asked if it were not a cursed business and fool's trick, and would have nothing to do with it. Nevertheless, at the thought that a house might float into his possession on a tear he experienced a peculiar irritation of the glands, and looked like a sick lark that is being clystered with an oiled pin's head. The house was the pin's head.

The solicitor Knoll distorted his face like a mechanic's apprentice whom one of his cronies is shaving and scraping of a Saturday evening by a shoemaker's candle. He was fearfully enraged at the misuse of the title "testament," and near enough to tears of wrath.

The sly bookseller, Pasvogel, quietly addressed himself at once to the matter in hand, and went over in a hurry everything of a moving kind that he had in his shop, or on commission, and looked the while like a dog that is licking off the emetic which the Parisian dog-doctor Demet has smeared his nose with. Time was absolutely necessary to produce the desired effect.

Flitte, the Alsatian, danced without ceremony in the session's room, laughed at all the serious faces, and swore that though he was not the richest of the lot, he could not weep in so funny a case for all Strasburg and Alsace to boot. At last, the police-inspector Harprecht gave him a significant look, and assured him that if Monsieur hoped by laughter through the well-known glands — the meibomian, the caruncula, and others — to produce the desired drops, and thus surreptitiously to moisten his eyes with this window-sweat, he would have him know that as little could be gained in that way as by blowing his nose, — in which operation, as we know, more tears flow into the eyes through the *ductus nasalis* than into all the church pews during a funeral sermon. But the Alsatian declared that he was laughing only for the fun of the thing, and not with any graver design.

The inspector, on his part, conscious of the dephlegmatized state of his heart, endeavored to force into his eyes something that would answer the purpose by staring with them wide open.

The morning-preacher, Flachs, looked like a Jew-beggar on horseback when his horse is running away with him. Nevertheless, he might have drawn up the needful water by the action of a heart which had already gathered about it the sultriest clouds, out of domestic and ecclesiastical miseries, had not the vision of the house come floating in with a joyful aspect that dammed the current.

Glanz, the church-councillor, who knew his own nature from the experience of many New Years' and funeral sermons, and was aware that he himself was the first to be moved when he sought to awaken emotion in others, rose up, and seeing the others hanging so long on the drying rope, said, with dignity, that every one who had read his printed works must know that he had a heart in his bosom which compelled him rather to repress such sacred signs as tears, in order to rob no one, than laboriously to elicit them for secondary purposes. "This heart has already shed them, but secretly; for Kabel was my friend," he said, and looked around. With satisfaction he perceived that they were all sitting still as dry as corks. Especially at this moment crocodiles, deer, elephants, witches, grape-vines, could have wept sooner than the heirs thus disturbed and enraged.

Flachs alone profited thereby. He thought over in a hurry Kabel's charities and the poor frocks and gray hairs of his female hearers at the morning service; Lazarus with his dogs, and his own long coffin; moreover, the beheading of so many victims, the sorrows of Werther, a miniature battle-field; and himself worrying and tormenting himself in his young years so miserably for the sake of that clause in the will. It needed but three strokes more with the pump-handle, and he would fetch the water and the house.

"O Kabel, my Kabel!" continued Glanz, almost weeping for joy at the prospect of the coming tears of sorrow, "when at

some future day, by the side of thy breast full of love which the earth now covers, mine also shall lie and mould —”

“I believe, worthy sirs,” interrupted Flachs, standing up and looking round with a sad and streaming countenance, “I believe I am weeping.”

He then sat down and let the tears flow more joyfully. He had reached dry land ; he had fished away the prize-house from the competing eyes of Glanz, who was now greatly vexed at the effort he had made, having talked away half his appetite to no purpose.

Flachs’s emotion was duly recorded, and the house in Dog Street awarded to him forever.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL.

## I. — THE SCHLEGELS.

THE brothers Schlegel play a conspicuous part in the literary circle which initiated and in part constituted the Romantic School. They assumed dictatorial authority and exercised a controlling influence — salutary in the main — on the current literature of their time. It was the influence of criticism, not of example ; often unduly severe, but none the less potent on that account.

Fastidiousness in criticism is a safe card. Let the critic be so exquisite that nothing recent, and no accepted models, satisfy him, and he becomes imposing. Let him propound some crotchet as a canon of art, and he is sure to have followers in never so devious paths. The pre-Raphaelism in pictorial art which prevailed a few years since may be cited as an illustration. Art, it was claimed, had gone astray since Giotto ; she had become carnal : it behooved her to return to the idealism of the thirteenth century. A similar reform was that demanded for literature by the Schlegels, both men of learning and ability. Without creative genius they made themselves the *tonggeber*, the setters of literary fashion. They did for the Romantic School what Nicolai and the Universal German Library, in a former gene-



ration, had done for the *Aufklärung*. The *Aufklärung* was defunct. To Nicolai and his school had succeeded Lessing and Herder, and Schiller and Goethe. But by these the rationalism of the *Aufklärung* had been merely superseded, ignored, not antagonized; the revolution was not complete until the opposite principle had asserted itself. The Schlegels, and especially Friedrich Schlegel, proclaimed the opposite principle of spiritualism, the characteristic principle of the Romantic School, — spiritualism in the contemplation and treatment of Nature and life, ultimating in mysticism. This principle the self-constituted dictators proclaimed from their *cathedra* in Jena in the pages of the “*Athenæum*,” and with autocratic arrogance applied as a test to the reigning celebrities of the day. Schiller was declared to be no poet; even Goethe was found wanting. Tieck alone satisfied the stern requirements of their infallible standard. Falk, in his portraiture of Goethe, records some humorous remarks of the poet respecting this dogmatism: —

“I allow myself the liberty to regard Schiller as a poet, and even a great poet, notwithstanding the latest imperators and dictators have assured us that he is not a poet. Wieland, too, they will not accept. The question then is, Whom will they accept?”

“A short time since, a literary newspaper — I forget whether in Ingolstadt or Landshut — formally proclaimed Friedrich Schlegel the first German poet and imperator in the Republic of Letters. God preserve his Majesty on his new throne, and grant him a long and happy reign! Nevertheless, it cannot be concealed that his kingdom is still encompassed by very rebellious subjects, some of whom [glancing at Falk] we have in our immediate vicinity. For the rest, the proceedings in our German Republic of Letters are as wild as those which marked the decline of the Roman Empire, where it ended with every-

body wanting to reign, and no one knew exactly who was emperor. . . . Wieland and Schiller are already declared to have forfeited their throne. How long my old emperor's mantle will remain on my shoulders no one can say. I myself know not. But I am resolved, if ever it should come to that, to show the world that kingdom and sceptre are not grown to my heart, and to bear my dethronement with patience, as indeed no man in this world can easily escape his fate."

Of the two brothers, Friedrich, the younger, is commonly affirmed to be the greater genius. It is not very clear on what grounds this superiority is claimed for him. Both were men of extraordinary ability, and if Friedrich gives the impression of greater originality, it is owing perhaps to his more eccentric and extreme views. August Wilhelm was, as it seems to me, the more comprehensive and talented of the two. We will take them in the order of seniority.

August Wilhelm, son of Consistorialrath Schlegel of Hanover, was born 1767, studied philology in Göttingen, where he became a favorite with the poet Bürger, who called him his beloved son in Apollo, and where he gained the prize for a Latin dissertation on the geography of Homer, and furnished the index to Heyne's Virgil. After leaving the University and spending some years as a private tutor in Amsterdam, he returned to Germany and established himself in Jena, where he received in 1798 the appointment of Professor of Literature. He there became intimate with Tieck and Schelling and other men of note, and edited, in connection with his brother, the "*Athenæum*," the organ of the Romantic School. In 1802 he went to Berlin, where he lectured for two years on literature and art. In 1804 he made

the acquaintance of Madame de Staël, who received from him the greater part of the information concerning German literature embodied in her work, "De l'Allemagne." He travelled four years in her company, sojourning for a while in the principal capitals of Europe. While in Vienna he gave the celebrated lectures on dramatic literature, which mark an epoch in dramatic criticism. In Sweden he was made Councillor of Legation, and received the diploma of nobility. Returning to Germany he distinguished himself by his political *brochures*, written in German and in French, and in 1818 was called to the chair of Literature in the new University of Bonn, where he died, 1845.

Germany, the land of scholars, has produced few who have so good a title to that designation as the elder Schlegel. The range of his literary culture may be estimated by the fact that he wrote with equal ease in four different languages, and was able to translate into Latin the "Gragas" from the Icelandic and the "Bhagavat-Gita" from the Sanscrit. Into his native German he translated the three prime poets of three nations, — Shakspeare, Dante, and Calderon. His Dante and his Calderon I know only by repute, as unsurpassed and unsurpassable. Of his Shakspeare I can say from personal acquaintance that he has made Shakspeare write in German; that there is almost nothing enjoyed by an English reader in the plays which a German may not enjoy as well. The masterly translator wrote also original poems, and among other things a tragedy entitled "Ion." These compositions have found no favor with either critics or the public. They are insignificant appendages to his graver works, and would not, it is likely, have survived without these. The chief, if not the only

merit of the lyrics is the skill with which the author manages difficult metres, such as the sonnet. The mould is correct, but utter want of inspiration discredits the filling. They are well-constructed fabrics, and only lack life to make them good poems. The author, in a sonnet written to himself, claims to be the creator and the "model of rule," — that is, of the rule of art. The sonnet is characteristic of the author's inordinate vanity. This is a prose translation of it: —

"The first who ventured on German soil to wrestle with the spirit of Shakspeare and with Dante; at once the creator and the image of the rule. How the mouth of the future will name him is unknown, but the present generation recognizes him by the name of August Wilhelm Schlegel."

But with all his vanity and other weaknesses, Schlegel was a man of extraordinary powers. As a critic he achieved a lasting fame, and in spite of some accidental partialities must be reckoned among the foremost in that kind, — less original, perhaps, than Lessing, but equally ingenious and profound. Many views which are now familiar he was the first to enunciate.

I select the following from his "Lectures on Dramatic Literature": —

"The distinction we have just stated [the distinction between Classic and Romantic literature] can hardly fail to appear well founded if it can be shown that the same contrast in the works of the ancients and moderns runs symmetrically, I might almost say systematically, through every branch of art as far as our knowledge of antiquity extends; that it is as evident in music and the plastic arts as in poetry. . . . Rousseau acknowledged the contrast in music, and demonstrated that rhythm and melody constituted the prevailing principle of the ancients and harmony of the moderns. . . . On the subject of the plastic arts,



an ingenious observation was made by Hemsterhuys that the ancient painters were perhaps too much sculptors, and that the modern sculptors are too much painters. This is the exact point of difference, for I shall distinctly show in the sequel that the spirit of ancient art and poetry is plastic, and that of the moderns picturesque. By an example taken from another art, — that of architecture, — I shall endeavor to illustrate what I mean by this contrast. In the Middle Ages there prevailed a style of architecture which, in the last centuries especially, was carried to the utmost degree of perfection, and which, whether justly or unjustly, has been called Gothic architecture. When in the general revival of classical antiquity the imitation of Grecian architecture became prevalent, and but too frequently without due regard to the difference of climate and manners or the destination of the structure, the zealots of this new taste passed a sweeping sentence of condemnation on the Gothic, which they represented as tasteless, gloomy, and barbarous. This was in some degree pardonable in the Italians, among whom a love for ancient architecture, from the remains of classical edifices which they inherited, and the similarity of their climate to that of the Greeks, might in some sort be said to be innate. But with us, inhabitants of the North, the first powerful impression on entering a Gothic cathedral is not so easily eradicated. We feel, on the contrary, a strong desire to investigate and justify the source of this impression. A very slight attention will convince us that the Gothic architecture not only displays an extraordinary degree of mechanical dexterity, but also an astonishing power of invention; and on a closer examination we become impressed with the strongest conviction of its profound character, and of its constituting a full and perfect system in itself as well as the Grecian.

“Now for the application. The Parthenon is not more different from Westminster Abbey or the Church of St. Stephen at Vienna, than the structure of a tragedy of Sophokles from a drama of Shakspeare. The comparison between these wonderful productions of poetry and architecture might be carried still further. But does our admiration of the one compel us to

depreciate the other? . . . We will quarrel with no one for his predilection, either for the Grecian or the Gothic; the world is wide, and affords room for a great diversity of objects. Narrow and exclusive prepossessions will never constitute a genuine critic or connoisseur, who ought, on the contrary, to possess the power of elevating himself above all partial views and of subduing all personal inclinations."

He refers the different styles of poetry to the difference in character and religion between the Greeks and the moderns.

"With the Greeks, human nature was in itself all-sufficient. They were conscious of no wants and aspired to no higher perfection than that which they could actually attain by the exercise of their own faculties. The very reverse of all this is the case with the Christian. Everything finite and mortal is lost in the contemplation of infinity. Life has become a shadow, and the first dawning of our real existence opens in the world beyond the grave. Such a religion must awaken the foreboding which slumbers in every heart to the most thorough consciousness that the happiness after which we strive we can never here attain; that no external object can ever entirely fill our souls; and that every mortal enjoyment is but a fleeting and momentary illusion. When the soul, resting as it were beneath the willows of exile, breathes out its longing for its distant home, the prevailing character of its songs must be melancholy. Hence, the poetry of the ancients was the poetry of enjoyment, and ours is that of desire. The former has its foundation in the present; the latter hovers between memory and hope."

In his lecture on Shakspeare, Schlegel vindicates the poet from the charge of ignorance:—

"The proofs of his ignorance, on which the greatest stress is laid, are a few geographical blunders and anachronisms. Because in a comedy founded on a tale he makes ships land in Bohemia, he has been the subject of ridicule. But I conceive

that we should do him great injustice were we to conclude that he did not, as well as ourselves, possess the valuable but by no means difficult knowledge that Bohemia is nowhere bounded by the sea. He could never in that case have looked into a map of Germany, whereas he describes the maps of both Indies with the discoveries of the latest navigators. In such matters Shakspeare was faithful only in the historical subjects of his own country. In the novels on which he worked he avoided disturbing his hearers, to whom they were known, by the correction of errors in secondary things. The more wonderful the story the more it ranged in a purely poetical region, which he transfers at will to an indefinite distance. These plays, whatever name they bear, take place in the true land of romance and in the century of wonderful stories. . . . He had not to do with a petty hypercritical age like ours, which is always seeking in poetry for something else than poetry. His audience entered the theatre not to learn geography and natural history, but to witness a vivid exhibition. I undertake to prove that Shakspeare's anachronisms are, for the most part, committed purposely and after great consideration. It was frequently of importance to him to bring the subject exhibited from the background of time quite near to us. Hence in 'Hamlet,' though avowedly an old Northern story, there prevails the tone of modish society, and in every respect the costume of the most recent period."

Speaking of "Hamlet," Schlegel gives this ingenious explanation of the bombast which characterizes the speech of the player who is to perform in the presence of the Court, concerning Hecuba:—

"It never occurred to them [the commentators] that this speech must not be judged of by itself, but in connection with the place in which it is introduced. In order to distinguish it as dramatic poetry within the play itself, it was necessary that it should rise above the dignified language of the play itself, in the same proportion that the theatrical elevation does above



simple nature. Hence, Shakspeare composed the play introduced into 'Hamlet' in sententious rhymes full of antitheses."

Of the play of "Romeo and Juliet," founded on a story which Shakspeare did not invent, the critic says:—

"By the manner in which he has handled it, it has become a glorious song of praise on that inexpressible feeling which ennobles the soul and gives to it its highest sublimity, and which elevates even the senses themselves into soul. At the same time it is a melancholy elegy on its frailty, from its own nature and external circumstances; at once the deification and the burial of love. It appears here like a heavenly spark which, descending to earth, is converted into a flash of lightning, by which two mortal creatures are almost at the same moment ignited and consumed. Whatever is most intoxicating in the odor of a Southern spring, languishing in the song of the nightingale, or voluptuous in the first opening of the rose, is breathed into this poem. But even more rapidly than the earliest blossoms of youth and beauty decay, it hurries on from the first timidly-bold declaration of love and modest return to the most unlimited passion, to an irrevocable union; then, amid alternating storms of rapture and despair, to the death of the two lovers, who still appear enviable, since their love survives them, and since by their death they have obtained a triumph over every separating power. The sweetest and the bitterest, love and hatred, festivity and dark forebodings, tender embraces and sepulchres, the fulness of life and self-annihilation, are here brought into close union. And all these contrasts are so blended in this harmonious and wonderful work into one impression, that the echo left in the mind by the whole resembles a single but endless sigh."<sup>1</sup>

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Friedrich Schlegel, his brother's junior by five years, was destined by his father for mercantile life, and placed

<sup>1</sup> These quotations are from Black's translation.



in a counting-room at Leipsic ; but feeling in himself a vocation for letters, at the age of sixteen he cut short his apprenticeship and began to prepare for the University. At Göttingen and Leipsic he studied philology, giving special attention to ancient literature. In 1797 he published an essay on the "Greeks and Romans," and soon after another on the "Poetry of the Greeks and Romans." At the beginning of the century he went as *privat docent* to Jena, and in company with his brother edited "The Athenæum," in which he promulgated with extravagant zeal the principles of the Romantic School, insisting first of all that poetry must not be divorced from life ; that to constitute any one a true poet his life must be steeped in poetry. He further undertook to enforce this principle in his unfinished novel "Lucinde," in which he advocates "free love" as altogether a more poetic relation of the sexes than the hard Philistine institution of marriage. There is nothing coarse or sensual in the book ; on the contrary, it leans toward mysticism, which in fact was the characteristic proclivity of Schlegel's nature. It was rendered harmless by its portentous stupidity, which prevented its being read except by adventurous spirits of the School who sympathized with the author, and by some hardened reviewers. Schlegel illustrated his doctrine by eloping with the wife of one Veit, a degenerate daughter of Moses Mendelssohn, who left her husband and children and accompanied him to Paris as his wife, and afterward joined him in his apostasy when, in pursuance of his romantic principles, he went over to the Church of Rome. His change of faith, or rather of ecclesiastical status, secured to him the favorable notice of the Austrian Government and a friendly reception at Vienna,

whither he repaired, and where he was made secretary to the Chancellor of State. In 1809, attached to the service of Archduke Charles, he distinguished himself as a diplomat by his official papers in the war against Napoleon, and as a literary man by his lectures on modern history and on ancient and modern literature. The high estimation in which his diplomatic services were held, caused him to be appointed in 1815 Secretary of Legation to the German Diet. On his return to Vienna he gave a course of lectures on the Philosophy of Life, and edited the "*Concordia*," a journal aiming to reconcile conflicting opinions in Church and State. We next find him in Dresden lecturing on the Philosophy of Language. I ought to have stated that in earlier years, while in Paris, he devoted himself to the study of the Hindu literature, and published his work entitled "*Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*," by which he became the pioneer of Sanscrit scholarship in Germany.

The lectures in Dresden were not completed; he died while the course was in progress, on the 11th of January 1829, — died in the midst of an unfinished sentence. The last word which he wrote was "*aber*." In two hours the hand which wrote it was cold. A stroke had finished the writing and the writer.

Friedrich Schlegel's poetry is certainly of a higher order than his brother's. But while it escapes the hardness and flatness of the latter, it runs to the opposite extreme of fantasticism and mysticism. The best, as it seems to me, of the poems I have examined is the "*Roland*," — a heroic poem written in the same metre with Longfellow's "*Hiawatha*." But the best of his poems are not the best of his doings; and had he written only

poetry, he would not have held the place he occupies in the roll of German authors. His strength, like that of August Wilhelm, lies in the direction of philosophic criticism. There we must concede to him eminent ability when even we dissent from his Romanistic views of persons and events. This Romanistic bias is conspicuous in his judgment of Luther. After acknowledging the beneficent influence which the writings of the great reformer exercised on the German language, he remarks:—

“In all his writings there is a conflict between light and darkness; between a firm, immovable faith and an equally indomitable, wild passion; between God and himself. As to the course he adopted at that parting of the ways, as to the use he made of his great intellectual power, that is a matter on which opinions now as then must differ and antagonize. As for myself and my own judgment concerning him, I need hardly say that the only impression made upon me by his writings and his life, is that compassion which we always feel when we see a man of great and exalted nature going to perdition by his own fault.”

In his lectures on modern history, which manifest great philosophic insight into the motive powers of the times and the sources and bearings of events, he emphasizes a defect in Luther's character which is undeniable, which his own followers deplored, but of which we may say that without it Luther could not have been the power he was or accomplished what he did.

“He was undeniably gifted with great qualities; and all the defects we are obliged to lay to his charge may be comprised in the single reproach that he was possessed with an utterly unbending self-will and arrogance. . . . To this one quality everything that by its passionate violence or otherwise appears

censurable may be traced, and everything in his peculiar views that is repugnant to the mild and loving spirit of Christianity. Whoever would restore the original pure form of Christianity must act in its own mild and loving spirit. Thus did Borromeo and Saint Theresa, with all their strictness, yet still full of love, really reform the Church. Luther's violence was not only without restraint toward his enemies, but even toward his friends and co-religionists, if they did not think exactly like himself. The expressions he permitted himself to use against Henry VIII. appear incredible in our age. His vehemence against the Calvinists, and against other disciples who separated from him, and whom he seemed to regard as rebellious deserters, exceeded in passionate utterance all that he was wont to manifest against the Anti-Christ in Rome, as he was in the habit of calling the Pope. Even to effect the removal of abuses and the reform of the ecclesiastical constitution this stormy violence was by no means the best course; because, from the close connection of Church and State, all proceedings ought to have been conducted with extreme forbearance, or the greatest discord must necessarily ensue. Least of all, could a true reform of philosophy be achieved . . . by a man who could speak of Aristotle, the great teacher of Alexander, as nothing but 'a damned rascally dead heathen.'"

Friedrich Schlegel followed the track of Herder in his wide researches into, and efforts to diffuse a knowledge and right estimate of, the literature of all times and nations. In that section of his essay entitled "Contributions in Aid of the Study of Romantic Poetry," which treats of the poetry of the North, he discusses the character of the Ossianic poems. It is well known that Macpherson's publication of what purported to be a translation from the Gaelic of the poems of Ossian, was hailed with enthusiasm through the greater part of Europe.



“But when the first tumult of astonishment had subsided, and the cooler influences of reason and judgment resumed their sway, doubts arose, in England more especially, as to the authenticity of these poems. The most cursory investigation of the old Scottish ballads in the primitive Gaelic tongue, made it evident that Macpherson had acted most unfairly in his version of these early poems, treating them in an arbitrary and careless manner. At length a complete edition, in three volumes, of the poems of Ossian, in the original language, appeared in London in 1807. And . . . now we [Germans] also possess an edition of these poems, conscientiously translated from the Gaelic original. [The poems of Ossian, from the Gaelic, in the original metre, by Charles W. Ahlwards, Leipsic, 1811.] By means of this work, we are now for the first time qualified to decide on the authenticity and true merit of the entire composition. Many doubts have, it is true, been raised in England as to the authenticity of our [German] Gaelic Ossian.”

But Schlegel proceeds to say that there is strong internal evidence against the supposition that “Macpherson and his Scottish accomplices fabricated and invented the whole,—an opinion which the scepticism and party spirit of many learned Englishmen have maintained with unreasonable pertinacity.” He then proceeds to discuss the probable date of these poems. Macpherson, it seems, “from mistaken patriotism,” anxious to give them high antiquity, and to carry them back to the time of the Romans, had falsified the text. The chief, styled by Ossian “King of the Shield,” he had rendered “King of the World,” and applied it to Cæsar. Their date Schlegel thinks cannot have been earlier than the latter portion of the ninth century.

“The exploits of Fingal and the songs of Ossian [which celebrate them], if we assign to the former the earliest period at which they could possibly have occurred, and suppose the lat-

ter to have been almost contemporary with the actions recorded, cannot have been earlier than the conclusion of the ninth or the opening of the tenth century. By a remarkable coincidence, it happens that their appearance was simultaneous with that of many other grand poetical works. The development of the Edda, in its present form, took place about this time in Iceland, while the knightly deeds of Charlemagne and Roland became the theme of Norman song. The Eastern poet, Firdusi, about the same time collected in his immortal work the history of Persia and the traditions of her ancient kings and warriors. Not much later the Spanish Cid performed those exploits which were almost immediately celebrated in heroic tales, and made the subject of ravishing songs and ballads. While in Germany the song of the Nibelungen appeared, relating the legend of Attila, and of his last marriage, and the misfortunes inflicted upon Germany by the Frankish and Gothic heroes.

“All these works appeared in the very heart of that long period of time usually designated the night of the Middle Ages, — a term, perhaps, well fitted to express the isolated existence of nations and individuals, and the interruption of that universal active intercourse which prevailed in the latter period of the Roman dominion. . . . In this view, and because the business and occupations of the time were not then prosecuted with the skill and dexterity of modern ages, that remarkable period in the civilization of mankind may indeed be termed a night. But how starlit, how radiant was that night! Now, on the contrary, we are wrapt in the gloom and confusion of a lingering twilight. The stars which shone upon that night are dim, many of them sunk even below the horizon, and yet no day has risen upon us. More than once, indeed, we have been summoned to hail the dawn of a new sun which was to bring universal knowledge, happiness, prosperity. But the results have by no means justified the rash anticipation; and if some promise seems still to herald the approach of a new day, it is but the chill breath of the morning air which ever precedes the breaking light.”

Schlegel calls attention to a very remarkable fact, — the absence in the poems of Ossian of any religion : —

[The Lowlands of Scotland were already Christianized, but the] “dwellers on the rocky fastnesses of the distant Highlands, and many chiefs of the old tribes, were either ignorant of or refused to accept the doctrine. Nevertheless, the worship of the Druids had long been totally extinct. This circumstance may account for the absence of any reference in these poems to their tenets or institutions, and also for the peculiar Ossianic mythology, or rather the total want of any mythology. . . . Ossian seems like a melancholy echo from the voice of a ruined nation, the last vanishing shadow of man’s departing faith in ancient mythology. Except the spirits of departed heroes hovering around their mountains in mist and cloud, Ossian knows no immortal or Divine being. He names none except Loduinn, who is probably identical with Odin, so long the supreme divinity of Scandinavia. It is as if the unhappy race whose last expiring groans were heard in Ossian had no longer any divinities of their own, and therefore turned with longing hearts to the majestic heroes and demigods of the happier Scandinavian North.”

I will add to these illustrations of Friedrich Schlegel one or two extracts from the essay on the “Limits of the Beautiful” : —

“‘The world itself is ever young,’ — thus sings the poet of Nature, — but its transitory scenes pass swiftly by. Men come, men go, eager as in a race; each stretches forth his hand to seize the torch of life. . . . ‘Fly!’ Nature seems to say, in seductive accents to humankind, — ‘fly from thy paltry legislations, thy miserable art, and reverently own thy allegiance to the generous, all-bounteous mother, whose full breast is the source of all genuine life. There is in the human breast a fearful unsatisfied desire to soar into infinity, — a feverish longing to burst the narrow bounds of individuality; and man



is often so overcome by this wild longing that his very thirst for freedom makes him a prey to the overwhelming force of Nature. In savage disdain he spurns the restraint of laws, and with loveless soul pollutes the glorious excellence of his being. Never was there any people more distinguished by their keen enjoyment of natural pleasure, or their excess in every intellectual and mental indulgence, than the Romans; never were any people more mighty in strength, more lawless, intemperate, and cruel than that nation, from the time when Brutus first stained his noble name with the guilt of assassination to the period of Nero's darker crimes. Their capacity for enjoyment and means of supplying it were so boundless that the profusion and luxury of a Roman life surpass the limits of our imagination. The very enormity of their crimes excites a feeling of wonder; indignation is almost absorbed in astonishment at the indomitable will, the unfettered license, which could dare their perpetration. The results of such excesses are inscribed in characters of flame on every page of their annals, and seem to be handed down for a warning to all coming generations. All that the earth could furnish them was insufficient to satisfy their unappeasable longings, till Roman vigor itself proved unable to withstand the ceaseless influence of revelry and riot. Enervated and debased, they sank into total extinction."

"The highest bliss of the human soul is love. The noblest form of love is attachment to our fatherland. I speak not now of that mighty instinct which burned in the breast of Roman heroes and patriots. Regulus, who with downcast eyes tore himself from his kindred, quitted Rome, and hurried, a noble fugitive, to the land of his enemies; Decius, who, devoting himself to the infernal gods, invoked their vengeance on his head and rushed into the arms of death, — seem to us rather demigods than men. Compared with the heavenly, joyous simplicity of Bulis and Sperthias, with the glowing cheerfulness of Leonidas, they are but barbarians; they fulfil the law, but without love. Patriotism was not the incitement of those who died at Thermopylæ; they fell for the laws, or to fulfil their vows. To die thus was the summit of their ambition.



In that pure system of government which aims at binding all its members in one general union, there is a communion of love, a mutual interchange of bliss for all. It was the loss of this which the unhappy Lacedemonian, who had forfeited his honor and was condemned by the laws of his country to perpetual ignominy, could not survive. This separated the Dorians from the Romans by a thousand glorious degrees. It was this that gave to the life of Brasidas so bright a glow of equanimity and peace."

"Imagine a character in which the susceptibility of the mind is small, but the sensitiveness of the soul so boundless that the slightest emotion thrills through every nerve of the spiritual being. The life of any creature so constituted would be a current of perpetual agitation, fluctuating like the storm-tossed wave between earth and heaven, now rising as if to scale the eternal stars, now sinking into the most fearful abyss of the deep. . . . Such may have been the temperament of Sappho, and this would give us a clew to the many contradictory ideas entertained of the glorious genius so essentially and intrinsically Greek. We too may say, —

" ' Still burns the passion that inspired the Æolian Muse,  
Still breathes the love her lyre's low chords betray.' "

One of her songs and some fragments of her verse deserve to be numbered among the choicest treasures flung by the wreck of a by-gone world on the stream of time, and borne on its bosom to the shores of the present. Their lofty tenderness seems, as it were, the offspring of a cureless melancholy. Countless songs of a similar character have since won fame; but all others seem feeble and commonplace compared with hers, and like dim earthly fires grow pale in the stainless rays of that immortal sun."

## II. — NOVALIS.

THE fairest, purest, tenderest blossom of the Romantic School, and, I may add, of all the schools and epochs of German literature, is Friedrich von Hardenberg, better known by his *nom de plume*, Novalis, — one of those ideal beings in whom spirit so predominates over flesh as to give one the impression of a stranger in earthly scenes, an ethereal visitant “moving about in worlds not realized.” I find no match for this rare genius among the authors of the modern world. The name of his countryman Körner, and among English poets those of Shelley and Keats, suggest themselves as nearest to him in their unworldliness, their lofty aspiration, and their early death. Shelley especially, who died at nearly the same age, resembles him in the ethereality of his genius. But Novalis added to nearly all that Shelley possessed intellectually a deeper intuition; and to all that Shelley was morally, a childlike, affectionate nature and a reverent faith.

In him were united in just proportions the poet, the philosopher, and the scientist, — by temperament a poet, by intellectual proclivity a metaphysician of the idealist order, by professional training a physicist, with a special fondness for mathematics. The moral beauty of his nature, the youthful loveliness of his person, won for him the enthusiastic friendship of some of the foremost intellects of his time, — the two Schlegels, Shelling, Tieck, and the geologist Werner.

But what most distinguishes Novalis among his literary contemporaries is his deep religiousness, a piety distinctively Christian, — Christian, according to the Moravian fashion; a piety which clings to the personal Christ

and rejoices in the consciousness of a personal relation with him. In early youth, after the death of his betrothed, which shattered his whole being, he experienced what is technically called a "conversion." The experience is indicated in one of his hymns. "In a time of utter misery," he writes, "when all my wishes lay in the grave, and it was a torment to be still on the earth, suddenly, as from above, the stone was rolled away from the sepulchre, and a new life opened up in me."

One of his brothers and his dear friend Friedrich Schlegel became converts to the Church of Rome. Hence the rumor that Novalis himself had joined that communion,—a rumor which misled Goethe, and was confirmed by Falk in his reported conversations with Goethe. But Tieck, his intimate friend, denies the fact, and declares that Novalis was utterly incapable of such a step. Whoever has read with attention his "*Geistliche Lieder*" must be satisfied of the truth of that declaration. There is no trace of Romanism in those compositions. His Christianity was altogether of a different type; it was, as I have said, Moravian. Yet he never joined the Moravian communion, of which his father and mother were zealous members. Nominally and formally he was a Lutheran; but he seems to have felt no special attraction to any ecclesiastical organization. His religion was essentially unecclesiastical.

Noticeable it is that devoutness in his case was not only entirely free from formalism and cant, or any of that outward show which often accompanies the religious life, but consisted with the utmost freedom and boldness of thought, and with utterances which might seem

shocking to conventional pietism. The same pen which indited those devout hymns, —

“Was wär’ ich ohne dich gewesen  
Was würd’ ich ohne dich nicht sein,”

And

“Unter tausend frohen Stunden,”

And

“Ich sage jedem dass er lebt  
Und auferstanden ist,”

could also write, —

“Miracles as contradictions of Nature would be  $\alpha$ -mathematical. But there are no miracles in that sense. . . . Nothing is miraculous to mathematics.” — “If God could be man, he can also be stone, plant, animal, element. In this way, perhaps, there is a continuous redemption in Nature.” — “We need not fear to admit that man has a preponderating tendency to evil. So much the better is he by nature; for only the unlike attracts.”

Friedrich von Hardenberg, whom I have thus far designated by his *nom de plume*, Novalis, was born 1772, in Wiederstedt, a family estate in the county of Mansfeld in Saxony. He was the son of Baron von Hardenberg, director of the Saxon salt-works, a wealthy, energetic man of business, who combined great practical ability with a cheerful temperament, high-toned morals, and strong religious faith; the mother, a loving Christian woman, whose chief interest in life was the temporal and moral welfare of her household. Friedrich was the second of twelve children. A sickly childhood delayed the unfolding of his mental faculties. No bud of promise appeared in the boy until his ninth year, when, encouraged by his older sister, who for that purpose took part in his boyish tasks, he began to show what was in him.



At the age of eighteen he entered the University of Jena, afterward that of Leipsic as a student of law, and finished his academic course at Wittenberg in the autumn of 1794.

His thirst for knowledge impelled him to seek it in all directions. In addition to the studies embraced in his proper curriculum, he applied himself to science and philosophy. Impatient of sciolism and vague generalities, he aimed at thoroughness in all that he undertook. In Jena he became acquainted with Fichte, who had been a protégé of his father, supported by him in school and college; and with Schelling, first a pupil of Fichte, whom he soon superseded. In converse with these men he imbibed the philosophic spirit, which guided all his inquiries and which animates all his writing. One of his biographers, Just, says of him: —

“I was to be his teacher and guide, but he became my teacher. Even in those departments in which by experience and practice I may be supposed to have had the advantage of him in knowledge, I was forced to summon all my powers to satisfy his spirit of investigation, which would not content itself with the commonplace, the known, the every-day use, but sought everywhere the refined, the profound, the hidden. He carried me away with him, freed me from the fetters of one-sidedness and pedantry by which an old business man is apt to become enthralled. By his conversation and writing he forced upon me a many-sided view of the same subject, and so far as my heavy moulded nature would allow raised me to the contemplation of those ideals which were always floating before his mental vision. . . . Who would have supposed that this youth, in order to fit himself for a man of business, did not shun the labor of repeating and entirely remodelling the same performance twice or thrice until it seemed to me what it ought to be; that he marked whole pages of synonymous or slightly differing phrases,

in order to have command of variety and precision of expression in business documents; that he would labor at the commonest tasks of a practitioner with the same diligence which he bestowed on labors more congenial to such a mind? But what he willed, he willed not half but wholly; he would pursue nothing superficially, but everything thoroughly. . . . There were three things for which, then, and I believe until his death, he had a decided predilection, — consistency in thinking and acting, æsthetic beauty, and science.”

From these extracts it will be seen that Novalis was destined, not less by his own preference than by the wish of his father, for a life of business. To this end, he studied the principles and technicalities of trade in Tennstedt with Just, whom I have just quoted, then chemistry with the celebrated chemist Mingleb in Langensalza, and mineralogy with Werner in Freiberg. By these studies he qualified himself to pass the required examination, which procured for him, a short time before his death, the post of assessor of the board of directors of the Electoral-Saxon Salina, where his scientific preparation suggested important improvements which he did not live to realize. He had no need to hurry. Accordingly, these preparatory studies, often interrupted by illness and other disturbing events, were prolonged through a period of six years; and within that term, from the close of his college days until his death, his literary labors — the avocations of his leisure hours — are all comprised.

While studying with Just at Tennstedt, on one of his professional journeys he made at Grünigen, in the neighborhood of Arnstadt in Thüringen, the acquaintance of Sophie von Kühn, a girl of thirteen, for whom he immediately conceived a romantic passion, like that

which the child Beatrice inspired in the boy Dante,— a passion which for him also was the source of a *vita nuova*, a new intellectual life. Tieck says :—

“The first sight of this beautiful and wondrously lovely figure was decisive for all his future. One may say that the sentiment which then penetrated and animated him made the contents of his whole life. Even on childish forms there is sometimes stamped an expression which, as being too blessedly and spiritually fair and lovely, we call unearthly, heavenly ; and in the contemplation of these transfigured, almost transparent faces, the fear befalls us that they are too delicate, too finely woven for this life, that it is death or immortality which gazes on us out of those gleaming eyes ; and it oftens happens that a swift decline verifies our fear. . . . All who have known this idol of our friend’s devotion are agreed that no description can express the grace and heavenly atmosphere in which that unearthly being moved, the beauty and majesty which enveloped her. Novalis became a poet whenever he spoke of her.”

Notwithstanding the difference in their ages, he obtained, toward the close of the year 1795, the consent of her parents to their betrothal ; but years must elapse before her maturity and his civil position would allow of their union. The union never took place. After long illness and a painful operation, his beloved died on the eve of her fifteenth birthday. Hardenberg had applied himself to medicine, had studied her case pathologically, with the hope of saving her. He could not believe in the possibility of her being taken from him. He was absent at the time of her death, and his friends were afraid to communicate the tidings. At last his brother Carl took upon himself the needful office. Novalis was stunned with the blow. As soon as he could rally, he repaired to Arnstadt, the town nearest the family estate



of the Kühns, and obtained permission to shut himself up for whole days in the room where Sophie had died. A sister of the family, led by curiosity to enter the chamber, was startled at beholding what seemed at first an apparition of the deceased. Novalis had dressed a lay figure in the robe and cap which she wore on the sick bed, and placed the book she last read by its side, in order to assist his imagination in recalling her idea.

For a time the mourner was disqualified for study, for all occupation but that of brooding over his loss. It was impressed on his mind that he should follow his beloved before the expiration of the year. But the year expired and he still lived. The lapse of time, though it left him still a mourner, had somewhat blunted the keen edge of his affliction. His grief had changed from a fierce passion to a tender reminiscence. It may seem unnatural to some, but in reality it was perfectly natural and entirely consistent with sincere devotion to the memory of his first love that he should form a new matrimonial engagement. There was a void in his life which only a woman could fill. He needed a feminine comforter, and he found one in Julie von Charpentier, daughter of an officer of the mines in Freiberg, where he was then occupied with the study of mineralogy. The second love was less passionate than the first, but not less genuine, and gave rich promise of domestic happiness in the culture and character of its object. But this, too, was a promise never to be realized. The brief remnant of Novalis's life did not suffice for its fulfilment.

The three succeeding years were years of peace, of social enjoyment and vigorous action. It was during this term that his best things were composed. But his bodily constitution, always feeble, could never satisfy



the demands of his soul, and soon succumbed to wasting disease. On the 25th of March, 1801, before his twenty-ninth birthday, he fell asleep, to wake no more in the flesh, while listening to the music of the piano, on which his brother Carl was playing at his request. It is seldom that the early death of a writer has left so strong an impression of a great possibility lost to letters and mankind.

The writings of Novalis, besides the unfinished novel "Heinrich von Ofterdingen," which was to have been his masterpiece, — an apotheosis of poesy, — are the "Hymns to Night" (prose compositions), "The Disciples at Sais," also an unfinished work, poems, and philosophic aphorisms. Of the poems, by far the finest are the hymns; they are unsurpassed by anything I have met with in that line, expressing deep feeling and religious experience in pure and melodious verse. The author's father, a practical man of affairs, with no taste for poetry, and not much liking though not opposing Friedrich's attempts in that kind, heard one Sunday in the Moravian chapel a hymn which affected him as he had never before been affected by sacred song, reaching down to the depths of his being. After the service, on the way home, he asked a neighbor whose hymn it was that the congregation had sung that day. "Is it possible," was the answer, "that you do not know your son's hymn?"

The aphorisms, or philosophical fragments, constitute about one-half of what is left to us of Novalis's writings. They abound in quaint suggestions and original views, sometimes paradoxical, always thoughtful, often profound; revealing an independent thinker, careless of systems, with a habit and reach of speculation and meditation beyond his years.

*From the Miscellaneous Fragments.*

“Where a genuine vocation to philosophize predominates (which is something more than elaboration of this or that thought), there is progress. In the absence of such vocation many learn to argue and form conclusions, — as a shoemaker learns shoemaking, — without ever dreaming or giving themselves the trouble of ascertaining the ground of their thoughts, which is the only sound method. With many the interest in philosophy lasts only for a time; often it decreases with years, or with the invention of a system which was sought only to save the trouble of reflection.”

“The highest problem of culture is to possess oneself of one’s own transcendental self, to be the *ego* of one’s *ego*.”

“... Without perfect self-knowledge we can never know others aright.”

“The more limited a system is the more it will please the worldly-wise. Hence the system of the materialists — the system of Helvetius and also of Locke — has been most approved by that class of men.”

“Philosophy is fundamentally anti-historic; it proceeds from the necessary to the actual. It is the science of the universal sense of divination; it explains the past from the future. The contrary is the method of history.”

“The beginning of the *ego* is merely imaginary. It must have begun thus if at all. Beginning is a later idea; it is subsequent to the *ego*; therefore the *ego* can have had no beginning.”

“ $I = \text{Not } I$  is the highest proposition in all science and art.”

“In order to thoroughly know a truth one must first have contended against it.”

“Designation by sounds and strokes of the pen is a wonderful abstraction. Four letters [in English three] stand for God; a few marks for millions of things. How easy hereby becomes the manipulation of the universe, how manifest the concentricity of the spiritual world! Language is the dynamic of the spirit-

realm. A word of command moves armies ; the word ' Liberty ' moves nations."

"In the same way in which we bring the movements of thought to utter themselves in speech, to express themselves in gesture, to stamp themselves in action, — as we move and stop moving at will, combine or particularize our movements, — in the same way we must learn to command the interior organs of the body. . . . Our whole body is capable of being put in motion by the mind. Witness the effects of fear, of terror, sorrow, anger, envy, shame, joy, imagination. There are examples too of individuals who have acquired command over particular portions of the body which usually are not subject to the will. In this way every one can be his own physician, can attain complete and certain knowledge of his interior condition. Then he will be entirely independent of Nature ; will perhaps be able even to restore lost members, to arrive at true conclusions concerning body, soul, life, death, and the spirit-world. Perhaps then it will only depend on his volition to give life to stuff ; he will be able to command his senses, to produce the forms which he desires, and in the properest sense will be able to live in a world of his own ; will be able to separate himself from his body when it seems to him fit ; to see, hear, feel, what, how, and in what connection, he chooses."

"Inoculation with death will one day enter into the healing art."

"What is Nature ? An encyclopædic, systematized index or plan of the mind. Why will we content ourselves with the bare catalogue of our possessions ? Let us contemplate and use the things themselves. The fate that oppresses is merely the sluggishness of our spirit. By enlargement and cultivation of our activity we can change ourselves into fate. Everything seems to stream in upon us because we do not stream forth. We are negative because we choose to be. The more positive we become, the more negative the world about us will be, until at last there will be no more negation, and we shall be all in all. God wants gods."

"All that we experience is a communication, a revelation of the Spirit. The time has gone by when the Spirit of God was intelligible. The meaning of the world is lost; we have got stuck in the letter, and have lost the Appearing in the appearance. Formerly everything was an epiphany of the Spirit; now we see nothing but dead repetition, which we do not understand. The meaning of the hieroglyph is wanting. We are living on the fruit of better times."

"All manifestation of power is transitional; stationary power is matter."

"Perhaps thinking is not externally operative only because it is a too rapid or too enormous force; or because things are too good conductors of the thinking power."

"Genuine mathematics are the true element of the magician."

"One may be a first rate mathematician without being able to cipher."

"Humanity is the higher sense of our planet, the eye which it lifts toward heaven."

"As only spirit is truly free, so only spirit can be forced."

"Nature is an enemy of eternal possessions. According to fixed laws she destroys all signs of property. . . . The earth belongs to all generations. Each has a claim upon all. The earlier should derive no advantage from the accident of primogeniture. The right of property lapses at the appointed time. . . . But if my body is a property by which I acquire citizenship, as a citizen of earth I do not, by the loss of this possession, forfeit my *self*. I lose nothing but my place in this public school, and enter a higher corporation whither my beloved fellow-pupils will follow me."

"The seat of the soul is where the inner and the outer world meet. . . . In sleep, soul and body are equally diffused."

"The greater part of our body, of our human nature itself, still sleeps."

"What the senses are in animals, leaves and blossoms are to plants. Blossoms are allegories of consciousness."

"The ideal of perfect health is interesting only in a scientific view. Sickness is necessary to individualization."



"Everything of itself is eternal. Mortality and mutability are precisely a privilege of higher natures. Perpetuity is a sign (*sit venia verbis*) of beings devoid of spirit. Perfection is the synthesis of eternity and time."

"The soul is the most powerful of all poisons, the most penetrating diffusible stimulus."

"Every disease is a musical problem; cure is a musical solution."

"Might it not be possible to cure diseases by diseases?"

"There is but one temple in the world, and that is the human body. Nothing is more sacred than this sublime form. Bowing to men is homage rendered to this revelation in the flesh. We touch heaven when we touch a human body."

"Man has always expressed in his work, in his doing and abstaining, a symbolic philosophy of his being. He announces himself and his gospel of Nature. He is the Messiah of Nature."

### *Æsthetics and Literature.*

"Nowhere is it more evident that it is only mind that makes the objects and changes of Nature poetical, — that the beautiful, which is the object of art, is not given us ready to our hand in [material] phenomena, — than in music. All the tones which Nature produces are rude and unspiritual. It is only to the musical soul that the rustling of the forest, the whistling of the wind, the song of the nightingale, the plashing of the brook, seem melodious and significant. The musician draws the essence of his art from himself; not the least suspicion of imitation can attach to him. To the painter visible nature seems to have prepared the way, to be his unattainable model; but in truth the art of the painter is just as independent, as much an *a priori* origination, as the art of the musician. Only the painter makes use of an infinitely more difficult hieroglyphic than the musician. He paints with the eye; his art is the art of seeing symmetrically and beautifully. Seeing with him is an active, forming power. His picture is only his cipher, his expression, his instrument of reproduction. . . . Properly speaking, the mu-

sician also hears actively, he hears from himself outward. This reversed use of the senses is, to be sure, a mystery to most men, but every artist must be more or less conscious of it in himself. Almost every man has in this regard a little of the artist, — he sees from himself outwardly, and not from without inwardly. The main difference is this, — the artist has vivified the germ of that self-moulding life in his organs, has increased their sensibility for the mind, and consequently is able by means of them to stream forth ideas at pleasure without external solicitation, to use them as instruments of any desired modifications of the actual world; whereas in the case of the layman they only respond to some external provocation, and the mind, like inert matter, seems to be subject, or to subject itself, to the restraint of the fundamental law of mechanics, according to which all changes presuppose an external cause, and action and reaction are equal."

"Every work of art implies an *a priori* ideal, a necessity in itself by which it exists.

"Sculpture and music are opposites; painting forms the transition from the one to the other. Sculpture gives us the artistically fixed; music, the artistically fluid."

"It is not the bright tints, the joyous sounds and the warm air that make the spring inspiring; it is the silent prophetic spirit of infinite hopes, a forefeeling of glad days, of the prospering of manifold natures, the presentiment of higher, eternal blossoms and fruits, mysterious sympathy with a self-unfolding social world."

"Goethe is quite a practical poet; he is in his works what the Englishman is in his wares, — extremely simple, neat, convenient, and durable. He has done for German literature what Wedgewood has done for the English world of art."

"Most people do not know how interesting they are, — what interesting things they say. A true representation of themselves, a record and estimate of their sayings, would amaze them, and reveal to them an entirely new world in themselves."

"In cheerful souls there is no wit. Wit indicates a dis-

turbance of equipoise; it is a result of that disturbance, and a means of righting it."

"Every science has its god, and that god constitutes its supreme aim: the god of mechanics is perpetual motion; of chemistry, a universal solvent; of philosophy, a first and single principle; of mathematics, the quadrature of the circle; of medicine, the elixir of life, etc."

"An idea loses surprisingly if I attempt to stamp it as my discovery and to make it a patent idea."

"Striving after originality is pedantic, coarse egoism. He who does not treat every other man's thought as his own, and his own as another's, is no true scholar."

"The act of transcending self is everywhere the highest, the primal point, the genesis of life. Flame is such an act."

"With every step toward perfection the work leaves its author, and is separated from him by more than distance of space. With the last stroke the master sees what purports to be his own work separated from him by a gulf whose breadth he himself can scarcely comprehend, and which he can only cross by an act of imagination. . . . At the very moment when it was to be wholly his own, it became more than he, its creator. He became the unknowing organ and property of a higher power. The artist belongs to the work, not the work to the artist."

"Lyric poetry is the chorus, in the drama of life, of the world. Lyric poets are a choir pleasantly compounded of youth and age, joy, sympathy, and wisdom."

"The first man is the first ghost-seer; to him everything appears to be spirit. What are children other than first men? The fresh glance of a child is farther-reaching than the presentiment of the most decided seer."

"It is only the weakness of our organs and our self-contact which prevent us from seeing ourselves in fairy land. All fairy tales are only dreams of that home which is everywhere and nowhere. The higher Powers within us, which one day like Genii will execute our will, are now the Muses that refresh us with sweet reminiscences in our toilsome way."

"Everything marked deserves ostracism. Well if it can ostracize itself. Absolutism must be expelled from the world. While in the world one must live with the world. We live only when we live in the sense of those with whom we live. All that is good in the world comes from within, — to the world therefore from without."

"A character is a perfectly formed will."

"Man consists in truth. If he sacrifices truth he sacrifices himself. I am not speaking of lies, but of speaking contrary to one's conviction."

"The moral idea has no more dangerous rival than the ideal of the greatest strength."

"If a man could suddenly believe that he is moral he would be so."

"The growth of our faculty and knowledge keeps pace with the cultivation of our will. Whenever we are perfectly moral we shall be able to work miracles, — that is, when we no longer desire to work any but moral ones. The greatest miracle is a moral act, — an act of free determination."

"If the world is, as it were, a sediment of human nature, the divine world is a sublimation of the same. Both take place simultaneously; there is no precipitation without sublimation."

"Imagination places the world to come either in the heights or in the depths, or in metempsychosis. We dream of journeying through the Universe: is not the Universe within us? We know not the deeps of our own spirit: inward leads the mysterious way. In us or nowhere is eternity with its worlds, the past and the future."

"The reason why many people cling to Nature is, that like naughty children they are afraid of the father, and take refuge with the mother."

"Nothing is more essential to true religiousness than a mediator who shall bring us into connection with Deity. . . . In the choice of a mediator man must be absolutely free; the least compulsion is injurious to religion. . . . The more self-subsistent man becomes the smaller the quantity of mediatorship [needed], and the finer the quality, — fetiches, stars, animals,



heroes, idols, gods, a god-man. . . . It is idolatry in the widest sense to view the mediator as God himself. It is irreligion to acknowledge no mediator."

"Praying is to religion what thinking is to philosophy."

"Where children are, there is the golden age."

"Where there are no gods, spectres rule."

"Poetry is the absolutely real: that is the core of my philosophy. The more poetical the truer."

"The beautiful is the visible *par excellence*."

"Spirit is forever its own demonstration. The world is the result of a reciprocal action between me and Deity."

"Scepticism is often only unripe idealism."

"Force is the infinite vowel, matter the consonant."

"Illusion is as essential to truth as the body to the soul. Error is the necessary instrument of truth. With error I make truth."

"We must needs be frightened when we cast a glance into the depths of the soul. Thought and will have no bounds."

"We ought to be proud of pain. All pain is a reminder of our higher rank."

"Time is inner space. Space is external time. Every body has its time, every time its body. Space passes into time, as body into soul."

"Bodies are thoughts precipitated into space."

"The ground of creation is in the will. Faith is the action of the will on the intellect. The power to believe is therefore will."

"Every Englishman is an island."

"Love is the aim of the world's history; the Amen of the Universe."

"When our intelligence and our world harmonize, we are like God."

"Love is the supreme reality, the primal ground of things."

"Too early and immoderate use of religion is exceedingly detrimental to the growth and prosperity of human kind, — like brandy to bodily growth."

"The unknown, the mysterious, is the result and the beginning of all things. We can properly know only what knows itself."

"If we have real desire and inclination to a thing, we have genius for it. Genius reveals itself by proclivity."

"When one sees a giant, one must notice the position of the sun to see if it is not the shadow of a pigmy."

"Be men, and the rights of man will come of themselves."

"The thinking man will find truth from whatever point he sets out."

"The curved line is the victory of free nature over rule."

"A point can only be conceived as in motion."

"As long as there are brave men and cowards there will be rank."

"Only the coward is not immortal."

"Philosophy must not answer more than is asked. Its origin is feeling. The intuitions of feeling comprehend the philosophical sciences."

"Pains must be endurable since we posit them ourselves, and therefore suffer only as we act."

"Philosophy is only one half, faith is the other."

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### III. — LUDWIG TIECK.

As Novalis was the fairest blossom of the Romantic School, so Tieck may be termed its ripest fruit; or, without a metaphor, its most prolific and accomplished author. There was a time when among the contemporary poets of Germany he held in the estimation of critics a position second only to Goethe. The popularity he then enjoyed, like most popularities, was short-lived; but his name is still cherished, his works are read, and a high rank accorded to him in the classic literature of his country.

The son of a cordage manufacturer, Ludwig Tieck was born in Berlin in 1773. Having received his preparatory education in the gymnasium of that city, he entered the University of Göttingen, in those days the foremost university in Germany. There he devoted himself to the study of modern literature, and acquired that familiarity with Shakspeare which made him, next to August W. Schlegel, the best German interpreter of the English poet. He began his literary career at an early age, and pursued it through sixty years with untiring activity. The most important of his juvenile productions was a novel in the form of letters, "*William Lovell*." It depicts the career of a young Englishman of talent and fortune, who becomes corrupted, sinks into vice, into moral ruin, and ends his life in a duel. The work is one of very considerable power, but tinged with the melancholy, morbid sentiment which characterizes the author's earlier writings.

In 1798 Tieck married Fräulein Alberti, the daughter of a Lutheran clergyman of Hamburg, where he resided some time after leaving the University. His translation of "*Don Quixote*," the best perhaps that has ever been made of that work, belongs to this period. In the following year he moved to Jena, and made the acquaintance of the brothers Schlegel, of Fichte, Schelling, and Novalis, and was hailed by the Romanticists as a fellow-worker and exponent of their poetic theories. In the same year (1799) he published his "*Life and Death of St. Genevieve*," — a tragedy in which the spirit of the Romantic School has found, I think, its highest expression. It is not adapted for acting, and has never been put upon the stage, but it possesses genuine dramatic interest and contains passages of ex-

ceeding beauty. I esteem it one of the gems of German literature.

A companion piece to the "Genevieve," exhibiting the comic side as that does the tragic side of romance, is the "Kaiser Octavianus," in two parts, which appeared in 1802. Prefixed to it, by way of prologue, is a dramatic act entitled "Romance," in which Faith, Love, Valor, Jest, and Romance are among the *dramatis personæ*. These all unite at the close in a song of praise commending the old romantic time : —

"Mondbeglänzte Zaubernacht  
Die den Sinn gefangen hält  
Wundervolle märchenwelt,  
Steig auf in der alten Pracht!"

"Moon-illumined magic Night!  
Thought by thee is captive taken;  
World of wonder, rise, awaken!  
Don thy ancient splendor bright!"

In the play itself, Romance in person appears again, and performs the same office that the Chorus does in Shakspeare's "Henry V.": —

"Mir vergönnt dass ich zuweilen  
Diene als erzähl'nder Chor."

After Jena, Tieck spent some years in Dresden. In 1805 we find him in Rome busying himself in the Vatican with the study of manuscripts of old German works, and enlarging his acquaintance with mediæval literature. On his return, he took up his residence for a time in Vienna, then in Munich, then in Prague. In 1817 he made a journey to London. Two years he spent in England, devoting himself to the study of the old Eng-



lish drama with special reference to the antecedents of Shakspeare, and acquired a more thorough knowledge of the ground than any Englishman of that day could boast. There he gathered his materials for his "Shakspeare's Vorschule." In this he claims for Shakspeare the authorship of the disputed drama, "Arden of Feversham," a judgment in which few English-speaking critics will agree. Another delightful little book resulting from these studies depicts the imaginary boyhood and youth of Shakspeare, representing his appearance at a *fête* in honor of Queen Elizabeth, and his converse with contemporary poets in their tavern orgies, where a fortune-teller predicts his future fame. Already, long before his visit to England, Tieck had made acquaintance with the plays of Ben Jonson. Among his earliest works are translations of that poet's "Volpone" and the "Epicœne."

Returning from England, he established himself at Dresden, intending to make it his permanent abode. It was, in fact, his residence for a longer period than any other of the many cities he inhabited in the course of his somewhat nomadic life. Here he was appointed *dramaturg*; that is, theatre critic and literary supervisor of the Hof-theater. Here, too, he gave lectures and readings, which were much celebrated, and gathered around him the culture and the fashion of the city. As a reader he possessed extraordinary vocal gifts, and is said to have been much in request in other cities where he happened to visit. In Weimar he read in Goethe's house one of Goethe's plays, the author and host excusing himself from attending.

In 1841 the King of Prussia invited Tieck to Berlin, and assigned him a pension, which relieved him for the

remainder of his days of all pecuniary burdens. Here he realized his long-cherished project of a Shakspeare theatre, which the king had built according to his direction. For the rest, he seems not to have occupied in the Prussian capital the distinguished position which he held in the Saxon. His lectures, which the king had made a condition of his bounty, did not attract the gay circles of the court, who sought more stimulating diversion. His last years were years of seclusion and comparative neglect, owing in part to bodily infirmities, and in part to the political troubles which in Prussia agitated the close of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth decade of our century. He died at the age of eighty, in 1853.

While in Berlin, and indeed before he left Dresden, Tieck had occupied himself chiefly with writing what the Germans call "Novellen" (little novels), something between a regular novel (Roman) and a tale (Erzählung). These constitute a large portion, but by no means the better portion, of his works. His principal merit, apart from the very great one of making his countrymen acquainted, by translation and discussion, with the literary riches of other nations, — notably the English and Spanish, — consists in his practical vindication of the marvellous, the supernatural, as a legitimate element of fiction, in opposition to the tendency and doctrine of the *Aufklärung* period, and his rehabilitation, in a comic sense and dramatic form, of the old popular wonder-tales, — "Bluebeard," "Fortunatus," "Little Red Ridinghood," "Puss-in-Boots," and "Tom Thumb."

Here Tieck shows himself in his most pleasing aspect, and displays what seems to me his most characteristic talent, — that of humorist, including the genial satirist.

As a poet in the narrower sense (as singer and writer of verses) he ranks below many whom in other respects,—in depth of insight and breadth of view, in fancy and imagination,—he far excels. His verses are deficient in feeling and tone, in force and fire. A good deal of skill—a skill on which the author plumed himself—is shown in the construction of difficult metres. Words and rhymes come readily,—too readily to be select,—but inspiration is wanting. If his fame depended on the lyric compositions with which his dramas and his *märchen* are interspersed, it would have perished long since. They are not the kind of poems that abide in the memory, or that any one would commit to memory for love of them. But the tales and the dramas will live in spite of the verses.

Some of the best of these are embodied in the “*Phantastus*,” the work by which Tieck is best known, and whose origin the author describes in the preface to the first edition of his collected works:—

“In the leisure of a country residence the thought occurred to me to enliven the collection, as many novelists have done, by living interlocutors. This framework, which might develop many things in the way of conversation, was to form a romance of itself, in which love, abduction, dissension, embarrassments of various kinds, were to end with reconciliation and the marriage of some of the company.”

This plan was partially fulfilled; and so we have in the “*Phantastus*” genial conversation and literary discussions, alternating with stories and plays read by different members of a party of friends who are spending a portion of the summer at the country-seat of one of the number. The two volumes of this collection

contain the "Blonde Eckbert," the "Faithful Eckhart," the "Elfen," and other tales, together with the dramatized "Volksmärchen," already mentioned. And not less interesting than these fictions are the characters and conversations with which they are interspersed.

Among Tieck's satires is one entitled *Die Denkwürdige Geschichtschronik der Schildbürger*, — "Chronicles of the Citizens of Schilda."

Schilda is a German Utopia, not like More's and other Utopias, — the imaginary theatre of an ideal commonwealth, — but the imaginary home of all sorts of stupidities and absurdities, such as the ancients imputed to the people of Abdera. Tieck's work is a reproduction, with new incidents and new meanings, of an elder satire which he uses as a vehicle for his own.

The following is a hit at Kotzebue and the popular drama of the day : —

"The people of Schilda were so noble-minded that they would have their stage to be an appendage of the Lazaretto, — a sanitary institution. They were conscious of many faults, and they went to the playhouse to be cured of them. For them the theatre was not merely a place for the entertainment of the imagination, or a place where people went to be amused with pleasant trifles. The Schildaites were so fastidious that they could not endure pieces in which they would involuntarily have been forced to laugh. . . . With the same correct feeling they also rejected tragedy proper. It did not concern them that a king should lose his kingdom and pine in misery, for they saw very clearly that they could not sympathize with such woes, seeing they were not kings. They could only understand cases where a man was burdened with debts, or afflicted with a son who preferred to squander money rather than earn it. Here their hearts were open to tragic impressions, and creditable tears flowed in abundance. Especially, where in the first act



the brave, industrious Hans is prevented from marrying the tender, right-feeling, love-breathing Grete; then the magnanimous spectators could not contain themselves for sympathy, and there were instances in which some fainted away, and others were obliged to have recourse to brandy in order to escape the fatal effects of such strong impressions.

“It will be seen by this what a high stage of culture had been attained by these our ancestors, whom many despise. They could look down with contempt on those ancient Athenians whose tragedies were so filled with superstitions and their comedies with nonsensical trivialities. Whereas, in the Schilda theatre the heart and the understanding of the citizens were duly cared for. There they were taught by warning examples not to make forged wills, and how wrong it is to steal, and the like.

“Their principal poet, the one whom they most adored, was named Augustus.<sup>1</sup> It was he especially who introduced the taste we have described. To him the people of Schilda were indebted for the beautiful device of having toward the close of the piece a noble man appear, who pays debts, and to whom alone it is due that the spectators could go home with light hearts. He is also said to have been the first who cautioned people against wit, and showed by his own example how it could most easily be avoided. He is also said to have invented the ‘*Presidenten*,’ and genteel villains who are made an example of in the interest of virtue; so that integrity, as is proper, always comes off victorious in the end.

“But nobility of mind may sometimes go too far, and, as it were, overleap itself. This was exemplified in the case of the Schildaites. They carried their magnanimity so far at last that they read poems and odes to their convicts in order to reclaim them from the paths of vice, and in the mildest way to convert them without the aid of the gallows. But, strange as it may seem, poetry entirely missed its legitimate effect on these hardened natures.

<sup>1</sup> The baptismal name of Kotzebue.

“The people of Schilda deposed their chief magistrate and established a democratic government, or rather a no-government. They abolished all laws, for they argued that there could be no true virtue where there was fear of punishment; the really virtuous are actuated by pure love of virtue without legal constraint. So each one solemnly promised to be good and great without compulsion.

“It happened about that time that the king of the neighboring country was about to start on a journey, which would take him through the territory of Schilda. These new republicans ascertained the day when he would arrive, and resolved to do something memorable in his eyes. They held a meeting, and agreed that not the least honor should be shown him, that they might give him to understand that they were freemen. Some one proposed, moreover, that they should treat him somewhat rudely, to show him that they were not slaves nor the minions of tyrants. This proposition gave great satisfaction, and they prepared themselves by reading books that would inspire them with the disposition which becomes freemen. One of them, who was esteemed the wittiest, was commissioned to enact the part of Diogenes, and to establish himself in a tub in the market-place. Then, when the king should come and should permit him to ask a favor, he was to say, in the words of the Greek sage, ‘I desire nothing but that you should stand out of the sun.’ Hereby it would be made evident to the king what a miserable creature he was compared with a free-born Schildbürger. The burghers were delighted with this bright idea, and each man learned by heart some genuine republican speech with which he intended to molest the king. They meant to declaim a great deal about the native rights of man, his original freedom, and the like. They could scarcely, in their impatience, await the day of his arrival.

“The day came at last. The Schildbürger were prepared; the philosophe lay in his tub and rehearsed his philosophic speech. Nothing was wanting but the appearance of the king. He finally appeared. The first who were to address him were so frightened

and confused by his presence, that they could not recall any adequate principle, or arouse in themselves any sufficient contempt of tyrants. They stood dumb and embarrassed before him; but some who were younger and bolder, seeing the distress of their fellow-citizens, and feeling ashamed that such a disgrace should befall the republic, came forward and attempted to repair the failure of their comrades. They assailed the king with disconnected rude speeches and abuse. He was unable to comprehend why he was thus honored. When at last he was informed by some of the elders that it was only done to try on their new liberty, their magnanimity and repudiation of the slavish mind, and that therefore he must not take it amiss, he laughed heartily. The Schildaites rejoiced to see the pleasure he took in their republican sentiments, and continued with increased zeal their patriotic declamation. As he made no motion toward the market-place, they asked him if he would not like to see their extraordinary philosopher, who was lying there in a tub, and might almost be called divine. The king followed them, and gazed on the man who had been at much pains to give himself a wild look. He laughed afresh at the fellow's odd deportment; whereat one of the Schildaites said: —

“‘There, you see, we told you that he would please you; he has a strong head, and is apt at giving short profound answers. You need only ask him something and he will serve you out quick, for he is one of the bright ones; he sometimes says things so deep that no one can understand them. He will make short work of your royal dignity. Try him, — ask him, for example, what favor you can do him.’

“The king, who was getting tired, said, ‘Well, my good Schildbürger, what can I do for you?’

“Then the Schildbürger answered, ‘My gracious Mr. King, give me a thousand dollars and you will make me and my family happy forever.’

“‘You shall have them,’ exclaimed the king. ‘I see your fellow-citizens know how to prize you; you are certainly the wisest citizen they have.’

“‘Oh, you villain!’ cried the Schildbürger. ‘Is this the way you keep your promise? Is this the answer you were to make, you traitor? Sir King, we declare to you that you were to be asked to stand out of the sun. That was what we had agreed upon. And it was for that, you villain, that we had the tub made for you in which you can lie as comfortably as in your bed. You rascal, what has become of the getting out of the sun?’

“‘Just hear the fools!’ Diogenes exclaimed. The sun is n’t shining; it has clouded as if it were going to rain. It is n’t the king, it is you asses, my fellow-citizens, that stand in my light. Therefore take yourselves away, that I may receive my thousand dollars in peace. Do you think that because you are so bent on being fools, there is not to be one sensible man among you?’

“‘We banish you from the land!’ cried the rest.

“‘All right. Mr. King, give me my money and we will leave the fools to themselves.’

“So ended this memorable day. Diogenes rejoiced greatly that he had so improved upon the rôle assigned him. He left the country, and the king continued his journey much amused by the folly of the inhabitants.”



## CHAPTER XIX.

HOFFMANN.

OF the various interests which supply the material of fiction, — the elements in human nature to which the literature of fiction ministers, — there is none so prevalent and none so persistent as the love of the marvellous ; and notably of that form of the marvellous which finds its topics in a world beyond the reach of known laws, — the preternatural. The progress of scientific culture has not outgrown the delight which children find in fairy tales, or the shuddering gratification which riper age derives from ghost-stories told in good faith, — stories which the narrator himself believes, or would have you believe that he believes.

A very different entertainment is offered in that treatment of the preternatural which aims not to thrill with terror, but to amuse with mild surprise ; which carries humor into ghostdom and devildom, and forces them to exhibit a grotesque side, where the ludicrous neutralizes the horrible. There is a species of fiction which finds the preternatural in ordinary every-day life, which places you in a world where the commonest things and persons take on a weird character, — as if the teapot on your breakfast table should turn up its nose at you, or your arm-chair dance a minuet in your study ; as if your horse should ogle you with knowing human eyes, suggesting a metamorphosed human soul ; or, *vice versa*, your worthy

grocer, with whom you have traded these ten years, should suddenly put off his human disguise, and stand before you in his native character of an owl or an ass. Many of us have read "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland." Suppose that wonderland treated as a reality, not as a dream ; suppose it charged with an ironical motive, and you have a species of composition peculiarly German, and one in which the writer of whom I am now to speak is a master, — Ernst Theodor Wilhelm Hoffmann, a man of extraordinary gifts, but one of a class, unhappily too numerous, whose genius has been dimmed and damaged by moral weakness and irregularity of life.

A master, as I have said, in his own peculiar province ; but that province is a low one ; and Hoffmann was formed to excel, if not in the highest, yet in one above the level of mere amusement. There was in him the material of a great historian, — a fine insight into hidden cause and motive, a large view and just appreciation of social conditions, a searching curiosity and a rare talent of narration. There was in him the possibility of a great philosophical essayist. In the line of music especially, the significant remarks we find scattered through his writings authorize the conviction that no one was better fitted to elaborate a philosophical theory of that art, in which he was a practical proficient as well as an original speculator. Music and musicians are constantly recurring topics in his romances. The influence of music on a sensitive nature was a favorite study, — prompted, no doubt, by his own experience ; and where that influence culminates in madness, as in his Rath Krespel and his Kapellmeister Kreissler, we perceive in those characters the reflection of a tendency of which he was conscious in his own constitution.

Hoffmann was born at Königsberg, in Prussia, on the 24th of January, 1776. His father, a jurist of some distinction, held an office connected with one of the Prussian courts. His mother was sickly and peevish, and when Ernst, their second child, had reached his fourth year, his parents separated, — the father leaving Königsberg, and the mother seeking refuge in the house of her mother in that city. The father died soon after at Insterburg, where he had held the office of Judge of the criminal court of the Oberland. The mother, a helpless invalid, outlived him by seventeen years. Ernst was placed in the charge of an uncle especially unfitted for that trust, and of an aunt who petted and did her best to spoil him. He was sent to the classical school at Königsberg, and in due season entered the University as a student. From the lectures of Kant, who then filled the chair of philosophy, he derived little profit; his tastes inclined to quite other pursuits. He was diligent in his preparation for the legal profession, but devoted a large portion of his time to painting and music. In the first-named art he never became more than a clever caricaturist, but in music he attained high distinction both as composer and performer.

In 1795 he was admitted to the office of auscultator in the Court of Königsberg. The duties of the office were light, and the salary proportionably small. He devoted his leisure to art, and supplemented his income by giving lessons in music. This employment was suddenly interrupted by a love-affair with one of his female pupils, who seems to have reciprocated his attachment, but whose superior social position precluded their union. The mental conflict caused by this unhappy passion made his residence in Königsberg intolerable, and forced him to seek

refuge in Gross Glogau in Silesia, where another uncle gave him shelter and some trifling employment in a government office of which he was the incumbent. Here he resided for the next two years, then went to Berlin for his third examination, the *examen rigorosum*, which he passed with great credit, and in consequence of which he received the appointment of assessor to the Court of Posen in South Prussia. In this Polish city, out of reach of refined society and intellectual converse, with none to sympathize in his artistic pursuits, he fell into intemperate habits, which clung to him through life. Here he found the wife who through all the changes of his fortune proved a faithful helpmate, and to whose tender care he owed the sole alleviation of the terrible sufferings of his last days. Her name was Micheline Rorer. Of her family nothing is known.

While awaiting at Posen his expected preferment to the rank and office of councillor, he amused his leisure with drawing caricatures, which a friend and accomplice in the character of a pedler distributed at a masquerade, and in which the magnates of the city were not pleased to recognize their own distorted likenesses. A complaint of this outrage was lodged with the authorities at Berlin, in consequence of which Hoffmann was transferred to the insignificant town of Plozk, where he spent two dreary years in what he regarded, and what was designed to be, a penal exile. At the end of that term, through the influence of friends, he was restored to favor, and received, in 1804, the appointment of Rath at the Polish capital, Warsaw. Here he found intelligent society, libraries, works of art, and the gratification of all his tastes. In connection with his friend Hitzig he founded a musical theatre, at whose concerts he



officiated as leader with great applause. With the aid of wealthy patrons a vacant palace was purchased for these entertainments, and the decoration of the concert-room committed to Hoffmann himself. In the discharge of this function he could not, in spite of past experience, forbear the exercise of his dangerous art. He contrived to introduce in his decorations caricatures of the features of well-known citizens, disguised, however, with wings and claws as griffins and other fabulous creatures. It does not appear that any mischief came of it. Meanwhile he was faithful to all the requirements of his office, and discharged its duties with entire satisfaction to all concerned.

His life in this gay capital was in every respect prosperous, and would in all likelihood have continued to be so had not political troubles brought it to a sudden close. It was the period of the Napoleonic wars, and it came to pass one day that the French, under the lead of Murat, took possession of the city, and putting an end to Prussian rule, cut Hoffmann off from his place and its income. He was suddenly cast adrift upon the world. A little money remained to him from the proceeds of his office and the distribution among the officials of the funds on hand of the court, and he hoped with the aid of his art to be able still to maintain himself in the city so congenial to his taste. But his art in those troublous times brought no employment. His small capital was gradually melting away; a fit of sickness accelerated the process. It was evident that he must either leave Warsaw or invent another art than those he already possessed, — the art of supporting a family without money. In this strait he sent his wife and child to her relatives in Posen, and went to seek his fortune in Berlin. There

he could find no employment either as jurist, as painter, or as teacher of music. The little money he had left was stolen from him. Want stared him in the face; but he would not succumb, and did not despond. He advertised for a situation as director of music in some theatre, — for a time in vain; but there came at last the offer of a post in that capacity in Bamberg, in Bavaria. The patronage was small and the compensation meagre, but nothing better presented itself; so he struggled on for seven hard years, until the concern broke down for want of support, and left him where he was before.

His next experiment was a literary one. It occurred to him that he might turn his knowledge of music to account by writing about it. He applied for that purpose to the editor of a musical journal in Leipsic, and sent him a humorous essay as a specimen of his ability in that line. It was a brilliant composition, and was fully appreciated. He became a regular correspondent. The first essay was followed in rapid succession by others in the same style. They brought him bread, — not abundant, but sufficient for the present distress. These essays, with some others, were afterward collected and published in two neat volumes, with the title, "*Fantasiestücke in Callot's Manier*." Callot was a French painter in a dashing, daring style, who flourished in the seventeenth century. Jean Paul wrote an introduction to the book.

Hoffmann's next move was another engagement as director of music of an opera house in Dresden, which proved financially as unsuccessful as that at Bamberg. War still raged, and the people in that part of Germany, crippled and straitened in their resources, had little money to spare for theatrical amusements. During his

residence in Dresden the city was bombarded by the French on the 26th of August, 1813, and Hoffmann noted in his diary some of the incidents witnessed and the dangers experienced on that occasion. He writes:

“Early in the morning I was awakened by the thunder of cannon. I immediately hastened to the garret of the neighboring house, and saw that the French had thrown up a battery at a short distance from our intrenchments, and were hotly engaged with the enemy’s battery at the foot of the hills. . . . Tidings came that the Emperor [Napoleon] would arrive. I therefore hastened to Brühl’s terrace by the great bridge. At eleven o’clock he came, riding on a small sorrel horse, rapidly across the bridge. There was a dead silence among the crowd. He tossed his head vehemently this way and that, with an air which I had never noticed in him before. He rode up to the Castle, dismounted for a few seconds, then rode back again to the bridge, where he halted, surrounded by several of his marshals. Adjutants galloped back and forth and received their orders, which he gave in brief words with a very loud voice. He was constantly taking snuff and looking through a small pocket-glass down the Elbe. . . . I had to leave because the terrace was occupied by the soldiery, and returned to my observatory. Between four and five o’clock the cannonading became most violent, — stroke upon stroke; one could hear the balls whistle. People would not believe it; but soon a party-wall, at a distance of not more than twenty-five paces, fell struck by a ball. Then it was evident that the fire was directed against the city. Our position was becoming unsafe, and we hastened to leave it. I was just about to enter the door of my house, when a grenade whistled and rattled above my head and fell at a distance of only fifteen paces, between four waggons filled with powder and just ready to start, and burst, so that the horses reared and ran. At least thirty people were standing near; but not only did the powder-waggons, whose explosion would have annihilated that quarter of the city, escape,

but not a man or a horse was injured. It is inconceivable what became of the fragments, since only a small one was found, which had struck a shutter in the lower story and fallen into an unoccupied room."

He proceeds to relate how the shells fell thicker and thicker : —

"I crept through a back street to the house of the actor Keller, who lived on the Neumarkt. We were looking very comfortably out of the window, each a glass in his hand, when a shell fell and burst in the midst of the market-place. A Westphalian soldier, who was pumping water, fell dead with shattered head, and at some distance from him a decently dressed citizen, who attempted to rise, but his bowels were torn away, and he fell down dead. Three more were wounded by the same grenade. Keller let his glass fall, but I drank mine, saying, 'What is life? Human nature is too weak to endure a bit of hot iron!'"

On the 29th he writes : "To-day, for the first time in my life, I saw a battle-field," and proceeds to describe in vivid language the ghastly sights which met his gaze, — horrors which I gladly pass by. On the 30th he once more encountered the Emperor, "who had a terrible tyrannical look, and with the voice of a lion roared to an accompanying adjutant, '*Voyons!*'" On the 22d of October, — "The Emperor is beaten, and retreats in the direction of Erfurt. So I have a well-grounded hope of the best and pleasantest life, — a life devoted to art; and all my trouble will be ended."

His hope of better days was realized, though not in the way he had expected. The year from the close of 1813 to 1815 had been on the whole the most trying of his struggling and eventful life. But the fall of Napoleon, which brought deliverance to Prussia, opened to



him a new career of professional employment. He had not intended to resume the practice of law ; but in 1815, through the influence of friends, he received the conditional offer, and in 1816 the appointment, of Councillor in the Kammergericht (Court of Exchequer) in Berlin. This post, which secured him a competence, was too tempting to be refused. His wanderings were ended, and Berlin became thenceforth his permanent abode. In the same year his opera "Undine" was brought upon the stage with great splendor and corresponding success, and secured to him not only immense popularity but solid fame as a musical composer.

His "Fantasiestücke" and other productions had already established his reputation as a writer. He was a man of mark — of foremost mark — in Berlin at that time. Now at length, after so many hardships and reverses, his fortunes were established on a firm foundation. His salary was ample, his music was popular, his literary efforts successful, his pen in universal demand. Nothing was wanting to his happiness but certain moral qualities, on which at last all happiness depends. Adversity had been his salvation, — prosperity proved his ruin. To one of his sensitive organization excitement of one kind or another was a prime necessity, — social excitement, free scope for his social gifts and conversational powers. Some natures would have found it in the literary and æsthetic tea-parties with which Berlin then abounded, — entertainments given by persons who made pretension to culture, and invited to their *salons* the lions of the day, partly for gratification of an idle curiosity, and partly for the lustre reflected on the host by the celebrity of the guest. To have it to say that last evening Mr. this or Mr. that was with us, or to be

able to quote, as if proceeding from familiar acquaintance, any saying one had heard from the lion of the day, was full compensation for any outlay of tea and cake and wax-lights. Hoffmann as a first-class lion was much in request for such uses. But Hoffmann was not at all the man to be lionized. His biographer says:—

“Two things were wanting to him for enjoyment, or even endurance, of these tea-parties, — petty vanity and good-nature. His vanity, if such it might be called, was of more colossal proportions. The intelligent tribute of his peers might gratify him, but the commonplace conventional flatteries of the incompetent he detested, and was not good-natured enough to dissemble his contempt. The talk of these half-cultivated, would-be connoisseurs was a weariness to his soul, and he treated it accordingly. He was rude, he was brutal, — a bear in the sheep-fold, an eagle in a dove-cote. If one ventured an opinion on some literary topic and expected his acquiescence, he would either stare at the speaker and make no reply, or address his answer — a contemptuous one — not to the speaker himself, but to another standing by. The gushing enthusiast who looked to him for sympathy in matters of art was met by a remark about the weather. They prated to him of music, of which they knew nothing while he knew everything, and he yawned in their faces. Worst of all, when young ladies were solicited to play and sing for his entertainment, and he was expected to express his delight, he was obstinately dumb; and when the entertainment was protracted, he testified with hideous grimaces his impatience of the scene. It followed, of course, that the lion-hunters soon gave up the pursuit in despair of such impracticable game. The invitations ceased, and Hoffmann sought more congenial entertainment in a circle of roystering companions, where the wit flowed freely, and more freely still the wine.”

Then began a period of swift decline. Nights spent in carousal, while they wasted the vital forces, undermined

the moral constitution no less. Yet Hoffmann, his biographer tells us, was no vulgar toper, not one of those who drink for sensual gratification, and drink till they are drunk. He drank only to get himself "mounted," as he termed it; that is, to put himself in condition to take the lead in the converse of wit. He drank for inspiration; and when it came, when fairly mounted, he charmed his hearers hour after hour with the flow and sparkle of his discourse. But the quantity needed for this at the outset soon ceased to suffice. Ever more liberal potations were required to produce the desired effect. Nor could these *noctes ambrosianæ* replace, they rather increased, the loss of brain power caused by the intellectual labors of the day. Only sleep could restore that loss, and sleep with him was reduced to two or three hours. The candle, as we say, was lighted at both ends; he lived on the gallop, and of such a life the term is short.

Remarkable it is that his legal duties were not infringed, nor his legal performances impaired, by this wild living. He was always in his place in court, and his written decisions remain to this day models of conscientious investigation, clear judgment, forcible argument, and luminous statement. Meanwhile his literary activity continued. He gave forth in rapid succession his "Nachtstücke," his Dialogue between two Theater-managers, his "Master Flea," his "Tomcat Murr's Views of Life," his "Princess Brambilla," his "Kleine Zaches," and, one after another, the four volumes of his "Seraptionsbrüder." The last-named work owed its origin to the kind endeavor of his friend Hitzig to wean him in some measure from his boon companions of the tavern, by providing intellectual entertainment accompanied with less ruinous conditions. Two other friends, Korieff and



Contessa, men of high culture and genial spirit, met by Hitzig's suggestion, as if accidentally, at Hoffmann's lodgings one evening, where, after a conversation which made him forget his customary orgies, the proposition was made, as pre-arranged by the visitors, that they should come together in the same way one evening every week, for conversation, and the reading and criticising of some composition which one of the four was to furnish for the common entertainment. It was an enterprise part literary, part social, after the fashion of the "Decameron" or the newer example of Tieck's "Phantasmus." It took its name, "Serapion Brothers," from the day on which the friends met, which happened, according to Madam Hoffmann's Polish calendar, to be the day assigned to Saint Serapion. Our author makes out another reason for the name, which the reader will find in the introductory narrative.

In the spring of 1820 Hoffmann, whose deepest passion was music, was enraptured by a letter from the great composer Beethoven, to whom he had never written, whom he knew only through his works. The modesty of this little missive is very pleasing, and the sending of it by one who wrote so little and was so reserved is a proof of the high estimation in which Hoffmann was held by the musical world.

VIENNA, March 23, 1820.

I seize the opportunity afforded by Herr N. of approaching a man of such a genius as yours. Concerning my littleness also you have written, and our Herr N. showed me in his album some lines from you concerning me. You therefore, I must suppose, take some interest in me. Allow me to say that this from one like you, a man of such distinguished endowments, is very gratifying. I wish you all that is beautiful and good, and I am, with high esteem, your Wellborn's most devoted

BEETHOVEN.



In the same year appeared the first volume of "Kater Murr's Lebensansichten." The hero of this work is an imaginary character, a musician, by name Kreissler, in whom the author has depicted his own aspirations and feelings, his humor and his experiences. It is in short a reflection of himself, and was therefore the work on which of all his productions he set the highest value. Two volumes only were finished. The third was to have shown the unfortunate musician driven to insanity by the shattered illusions and disappointments of life, and was to have closed by way of supplement with "Lucid Intervals of a Mad Musician."

The title "Tomcat Murr" was suggested by a pet cat of the author, a beautiful creature that occupied a drawer of his writing-table, which it opened with its paws, and where it lay on the top of his papers. He was never tired of relating instances of the exceptional intelligence of this wonderful animal; and when Murr died, his master sent his friend Hitzig a bulletin card with these words: —

In the night of the 29th of November my beloved pupil, the Kater Murr, after brief but severe suffering, passed on to a better life, in the fourth year of his hopeful age. I hasten humbly to communicate the intelligence to sympathizing patrons and friends. All who knew the youth, now in eternity, will justify my profound grief, and honor it with silence.

HOFFMANN.

No one, says Hitzig, will be surprised at this jest who knows how closely connected were jest and grief in Hoffmann's nature. In fact the loss was a real affliction, and he described to his friend with tears the creature's death, how piteously he moaned, and how beseechingly he looked

into his master's eyes for sympathy and aid. "Now there is a void in the house for my wife and me."

Hoffmann's last birthday, January 24, 1822, was gladdened by a visit from an old schoolmate, Hippel, whom he had not seen since their school-boy days. On this occasion he entertained a party of several friends with his usual hospitality.

But already the grasp of disease was on him. He no longer circulated as formerly among his guests, filling their glasses with his own hand, but kept his seat, and while serving them with costly wines, drank only water. In the course of the conversation something was said about death, and one of the guests incidentally remarked that life is not the greatest good, whereupon Hoffmann broke in with great vehemence, "No, no! Life, life! — let me but live under whatever conditions!" Hitzig says, "There was something terrible in the way in which he ejaculated these words, and fearfully his wish was fulfilled." He continued to live for five months longer, but under what conditions! Day by day one after another of his bodily organs refused its service. The disease known as *tabes dorsalis*, consumption of the spinal marrow, developed itself; the life departed from his hands and feet and other portions of his system. He suffered frightfully, but his brain was still active; he clung to life, and inferred from the soundness of the principal organ the recovery of all the rest. In this condition he dictated some of his best compositions, several characteristic essays afterward published, and — what is more remarkable — in the last weeks of his life a legal decision of a very difficult and important case of contested copyright, evincing a professional judgment as clear and sound as in his best days. On the 21st of June the symptoms of

approaching death began to show themselves in his inability to take nourishment. He had previously undergone the painful operation of cauterization. On the 24th, the disease having done its work, he ceased to suffer pain. This he hailed as a promise of recovery, and said to his physician, "It will soon be over now, will it not?" In a very different sense the physician answered, "Yes, it will soon be over." On the evening of the 25th he wished to resume the dictation of his unfinished story, entitled "*Der Feind*," and asked to have the sentence read to him at which he had left off. His wife dissuaded him; then he had himself turned with his face to the wall. The death-rattle was in his throat; and when Hitzig was sent for, his friend was gone.

We perceive, in this life of forty-six years, an example of the influence of hereditary taint,—a nature pre-doomed by the consequences, direct and indirect, of parental misfortune and parental guilt. A sickly and querulous mother entails a morbid temperament on a son of whose childhood she is physically and morally disqualified to undertake the charge. Abandoned by a selfish and unscrupulous father, he is delivered over to a formal pedantic uncle, utterly unable to comprehend the nature and needs of the boy, and an over-indulgent aunt.

Unfortified by wholesome discipline, as a student left to his own devices, he is saved from moral ruin partly through absence of external temptation, and partly by intellectual appetites and a passion for music which furnished occupation for his leisure hours. Notwithstanding the disadvantages of an inauspicious youth, he brings into manhood a force of resolution sufficient to accomplish by arduous study his preparation for profes-



sional life. He acquits himself with honor when examined for his degree. He afterward breaks through the entanglement of a hopeless passion by resolutely quitting his native city. When calamity befalls and want threatens, he proves himself equal to every exigency ; fights battle after battle with adversity, and comes off victorious. But when at last his hard struggles and patient waiting are crowned with full prosperity and all his wishes are gratified, the latent evil in his nature breaks forth, debases his life, and drags him through frightful suffering to premature death.

That Hoffmann in early life was not wanting in self-control, appears from the constancy with which he kept his vow to abstain from gambling after his first and only attempt in that line, — an attempt which was crowned with extraordinary success. During his self-imposed exile at Glogau he accompanied a friend to a watering-place, and while there, at his friend's request, staked a sum of money which he handed him at a gaming-table. Having been successful in his friend's service, it occurred to Hoffmann the next evening to experiment on his own account. He shall tell the story himself : —

“ If yesterday fortune favored me, to-day it seemed as if some mighty spirit whom chance obeyed was in league with me. I might turn the cards as I pleased, not a card missed. . . . My senses reeled ; often, while fresh gold poured in upon me, it seemed as if I were in a dream, and would immediately awake when I thought to pocket my gains. At the stroke of two the play, as is customary, stopped. At the moment when I was about to leave the hall, an old officer seized me by the shoulder, and fixing a grave, severe look upon me, said : ‘ Young man, if you had understood the game, you might have broken the bank ; but when you come to understand it, the Devil will get you as he has done all the rest.’ Therewith he left me,



without waiting to hear what I might say in reply. The morning had already dawned when I reached my chamber, and from all my pockets I poured out the gold on the table. Imagine the sensation of a youth, who in utter dependence, having been restricted to a meagre allowance of pocket-money, finds himself suddenly, as if by a stroke of magic, in possession of a sum so large as for the moment to be regarded as a fortune. But while I gazed at the gold-heap, my mind was suddenly seized with an anxiety, a distress which covered me with a cold death-sweat. The words of the old officer now revealed to me the most terrible significance. It seemed to me as if the gold that glittered on the table were the earnest-money wherewith the Dark Power had purchased my soul, which now could not escape perdition. The blossom of my life seemed to be gnawed by a venomous worm, and I sank into deadly despair. Then flamed the morning higher from behind the mountains. I crouched before the window ; I gazed with fervent longing toward the sun, before whose coming the dark spirits of the night must flee. And when field and wood gleamed in the golden rays, it was also day once more in my soul. There came to me the blessed feeling of strength to resist every temptation, and to guard my life from that demonic course in which, sooner or later, it must irrevocably perish. I vowed to myself, by all that is holiest, never to touch another card, and I have strictly kept my vow."

Hoffmann's biographer testifies that he never played again.

I place Hoffmann very high, so far as native gifts are concerned, among the writers of Germany. In wealth of imagination, in force of conception, and the faculty of presentation he has few equals. In caustic humor he also excels. But the morbid spirit, the fantastic character, the *bizarrerie* of so much of his writing has tended to diminish the estimation which would otherwise be accorded to him. It would be, however, a mistake to suppose that

all his productions are infected with this vicious element. Some of them are wholly free from it; they owe nothing of their interest to the preternatural. They rest on solid human ground,—on the physically possible, sometimes, as in the case of “The Fräulein Scuderi,”—on historic fact, and are models of sprightly and engaging narrative. Nevertheless, it must be conceded that the characteristic things of Hoffmann are those wild fictions of impossible beings and impossible transactions, those tales of *diablerie*, with which his name, ever since the publication of the “Fantasiestücke,” has been identified,—the “Golden Pot,” the “Sandman,” “Master Flea,” the “Little Zaccheus,” and others.

Of the “Fantasiestücke,” one of the most characteristic in its mixture of sorcery and irony, is the story of the “Lost Looking-glass Image,” the idea of which was suggested by Chamisso’s “Peter Schlemihl,” but is worked up in Hoffmann’s own peculiar way. An honest German, Erasmus Spikher, who has always been dreaming of Italy, has saved money enough to realize his dream and starts for Florence, leaving a wife and their little ’Rasmus at home. The dear pious housewife shed a thousand tears at parting; she lifted little ’Rasmus, after carefully wiping his nose and mouth, into the carriage to receive the father’s last kiss. “Farewell, my dear Erasmus Spikher!” said the sobbing wife. “I will take good care of the house; think of me often, remain faithful, and don’t lose your handsome travelling-cap out of the window when you nod in your sleep, as you are apt to do.” Spikher promised.

In Florence he falls into bad company, and, forgetful of his domestic obligations, becomes desperately enamoured of one Giulietta, who encourages his passion, but

who, it seems, is leagued with a certain mysterious personage, Dr. Dappertutto, who turns out to be a Mephistopheles, and lies in wait to capture souls. At an evening entertainment it has been contrived that Spikher shall be insulted by a young Italian, who mocks at his German ways. An altercation ensues; they come to blows, and the German unintentionally kills his adversary. He is obliged to flee, but before leaving the country seeks a final interview with Giulietta. "Ah, Erasmus, too soon you will forget me!" she murmurs. "Oh, could I be wholly and forever yours!" he replies. They were standing before a beautiful broad mirror, let into the wall of the cabinet, and brilliantly lighted with tapers on each side. Giulietta, with her arm around her lover, whispers, "Leave me your looking-glass image, my beloved; it shall be mine, and remain with me forever." He is taken a-back by this somewhat unusual request, and hesitates. "What, you grudge me even this dream of your *Ich*? — you who wanted to be mine with your body and life! Not even your unstable image is to remain with me and accompany me through my henceforth desolate life." Spikher cannot resist the appeal, he gives his consent. She stretched her arms longingly toward the looking-glass. Erasmus saw his image come forth independent of his movements; he saw it glide into Giulietta's arms, who disappeared with it, leaving a peculiar odor behind. He heard all manner of hateful voices sniggering and laughing in devilish mockery. Seized with the death-cramp of the deepest horror, he sank senseless to the ground; but a fearful anxiety aroused him from this torpor. In thick darkness he reeled out of the door and down the stairs into the street. There he encountered Dappertutto, who, pretend-



ing ignorance, affects to condole with him and to show him how he may escape the officers of justice and continue to enjoy Giulietta's society. He proposes a means by which the lover can present at any moment a different appearance, and so baffle his pursuers.

"As soon as it is day, you will have the goodness to look long and attentively in some looking-glass. I will then perform certain operations with your looking-glass image, which will not injure it, and you are safe."

"'Terrible, terrible!' cried Erasmus.

"'What is terrible, most worthy sir?' he asked mockingly.

"'Alas! I have — I have —' his victim stuttered.

"'You have left your image with Giulietta. Bravissimo, dearest! Now you can run through fields and woods, through cities and villages, till you have found your wife with little 'Rasmus, and be once more the father of a family, although without a looking-glass image. Your wife will not care much for that when she has you bodily, and Giulietta only your shining dream = I.'

"'Cease, terrible man!' cried Erasmus.

He tears himself away, and succeeds in making his escape from Italy. On his way home he has many adventures, the most remarkable of which is one by which he is first made painfully aware of what he has sacrificed. He has stopped to rest in a large city, and anticipating no evil takes his place with other guests at the *table d'hôte* of his hotel, not perceiving that there is a large mirror opposite him. A waiter who stood behind his chair became aware that the chair reflected in the mirror across the table had no occupant. He communicated his discovery to Erasmus's neighbor, and he to his. It ran round the table; there was a murmuring and a whispering; they looked at Erasmus and then into the



mirror. As yet he had not perceived that he was the object of these communications, when a man of grave demeanor rose from the table, led him to the mirror, looked in, and then turning to the company, exclaimed, "It is actually true, — he has no looking-glass image." "He has no looking-glass image!" they all cried out. "*A mauvais sujet! a homo nefas!* Out of the room with him!" Filled with rage and shame, Erasmus fled to his chamber; but scarcely was he there when a notice came from the police, to the effect that within the space of an hour he must present himself before the magistracy with a complete and perfectly resembling looking-glass image, or, failing that, must leave the city.

Erasmus hurried off, pursued by the idle mob and the street boys, crying, "There he rides, — the man who has sold his image to the devil! There he rides!" At last he found himself in the open country, and now wherever he went he gave orders to have all the looking-glasses covered, on the pretext of a natural abhorrence of all reflections. For which reason he was nicknamed General Suwarrow, who did the same thing.

He reached his native city, came to his home, and was joyfully received by his wife and little 'Rasmus. He thought that in the peace and quiet of domestic life he would soon recover from the grief of his loss. It happened one day that Spikher, who had banished the beautiful Giulietta entirely from his thoughts, was playing with little 'Rasmus. The child had blacked his little hands with soot from the stove, and smirched his father's face with it. "Oh, papa, papa! I have made you all black. Just look!" He ran and fetched a looking-glass before Spikher could prevent it, held it before his father, and looked into it himself. But immediately he

let it fall, burst into crying, and ran out of the room. Soon after, the wife entered with amazement and horror in her face. "What is it that 'Rasmus tells me?" she exclaimed. Spikher interrupted her with a forced smile, "That I have no looking-glass image, is it, my love?" And he tried to convince her of the absurdity of supposing that one could lose his image; but even if he could, the loss was of no importance. Every such reflection is, after all, an illusion. Self-contemplation leads to vanity; and besides, such an image creates a schism in our ego, dividing it into reality and dream. While he was speaking, the wife had hurried quickly to remove the cloth from a covered looking-glass in their sitting-room.

She looked in, and as if struck by lightning fell to the ground. Spikher raised her up, but as soon as she came to herself she repelled him with horror. "Leave me!" she cried, "leave me, you horrible man! You are not my husband! No; you are a spirit from hell, who wants to rob me of my salvation. Away! leave me! thou hast no power over me, accursed!" Her yells penetrated the house. The terrified inmates rushed in, and Spikher rushed out of the house full of rage and despair. As if driven by wild frenzy, he ran along the deserted walks of the city park. Giulietta's image presented itself to his mind with angelic beauty. "Is it thus," he exclaimed, "that you avenge yourself for my leaving you and giving you only my image instead of myself? Ah, Giulietta! I will be thine with body and soul. She for whom I sacrificed you has rejected me. Giulietta! Giulietta! I will be yours!"

"That is perfectly feasible," said a voice. It was that of Signor Dappertutto, who suddenly stood close by his side in a scarlet coat with glittering steel buttons. These

were words of consolation for the unfortunate Erasmus, and he did not notice Dappertutto's malicious, hateful expression. He stood still and asked, with piteous tone, —

“How shall I find her again? She is probably lost to me forever.”

“Not at all,” said Dappertutto; “she is not far from here, and yearns astonishingly for your worthy self, because, as you know, honored sir, a looking-glass image is but a base illusion. For the rest, as soon as she has your worthy person, — body, life, and soul, — she will give you back your agreeable looking-glass image, smooth and uninjured, with many thanks.”

“Bring me to her! bring me to her!” cried Erasmus. “Where is she?”

“There is a little trifle in the way,” said Dappertutto, “before you can see Giulietta and give her yourself in exchange for your looking-glass image. Your Honor is not competent to dispose so entirely of your worthy person; you are fettered by certain ties which will have to be loosed first, — namely, your Honor's beloved wife, together with your promising little son.”

“What are you driving at?” said Erasmus.

“Unconditional severance of these bonds,” continued Dappertutto, “may be effected in a very easy, humane way. You know, from your acquaintance with me in Florence, that I am skilled in the preparation of the most wonderful medicaments, and I have here a little domestic remedy in my hand. Those who are in your way and dear Giulietta's need only drink a few drops of this, and they will sink away without a sound or sign of pain. It is true, people call that dying, and death is said to be bitter; but isn't the taste of bitter almonds very pleasant? And that is all the bitterness there is in the death which this little flask encloses. As soon as the happy sinking-away takes place, your estimable family will diffuse a pleasant odor of bitter almonds. Take it, honored sir.” He handed to Erasmus a little phial.

“Horrible man!” exclaimed the latter, “would you have me poison my wife and child?”



“Who talks of poison?” the red man rejoined. “The phial contains nothing but a pleasant family medicine. I have at my command other means of setting you at liberty, but I would like to operate through yourself in such a natural and humane way. That is just my weakness. Take it without scruple, my dearest.”

Erasmus — he could not tell how — had the phial in his hand. Without stopping to think, he ran home to his chamber. His wife had spent the night amid a thousand anxieties and torments. She persisted in declaring that the returned was not her husband, but an infernal spirit who had assumed his shape. As soon as Spikher entered the house, all the inmates fled from him in fright. Only little 'Rasmus ventured to come near and ask, in a childish way, why he had not brought back his looking-glass image; that his mother would worry herself to death about it. Erasmus stared wildly at the boy. He had Dappertutto's phial still in his hand. The little one had his pet dove on his arm; the bird approached the phial with its bill, pecked the cork, and immediately dropped its head and fell down dead. Erasmus sprang up in terror. “Traitor!” he cried, “you shall not tempt me to commit the hellish deed.” He hurled the phial through the open window; it broke in pieces on the stone pavement of the courtyard. A delightful odor of almonds went up and spread through the room. Little 'Rasmus had run away in a fright. Spikher spent the day in torments until midnight. Giulietta's image grew ever more vivid in his thought. A little scarlet berry that had dropped from a necklace which once encircled her throat, was still in his possession. He drew it forth, and gazing upon it fixed his mind on his lost love. It seemed to him as if a magic



fragrance exhaled from the pearl,—the same that had breathed upon him in Giulietta's presence. "Ah, Giulietta!" he cried, "if I could but see you once more, I would be content to perish in ruin and shame."

Scarcely had he uttered these words when it began to rustle in the hall before the door. He heard footsteps; there was a knocking at the door of the chamber. His breath stopped in bodeful anxiety and hope. He opened the door; Giulietta entered in all her lofty beauty and grace.

Mad with love and longing, he locked her in his arms. "Here I am," she said, gently; "but see how carefully I have kept your looking-glass image." She uncovered the looking-glass, and Erasmus saw with delight his image clinging to Giulietta; but, independent of himself, it reflected none of his movements. Erasmus shuddered.

"Giulietta, I shall go distracted with love for you. Give me the image, and take myself, body and life and soul."

"There is still something between us, you know; has not Dappertutto told you?" said Giulietta.

Erasmus interrupted her,—"Heavens, if there is no other way to become yours I will rather die!"

"Nor shall Dappertutto," continued Giulietta, "by any means tempt you to such an act. It is bad, to be sure, that a vow and the word of a priest can have such power; but you must loose the band which binds you, otherwise you can never be wholly mine; and there is a better method for that than the one which Dappertutto proposed."

"What is it?" asked Erasmus eagerly.

Giulietta threw her arm around his neck, and leaning her head on his breast, whispered softly,—"You sign your name, 'Erasmus Spikher,' to a paper, with these few words: 'I give to my good friend Dappertutto power over my wife and child, to do with them as he pleases, and to sever the tie which binds

me, forasmuch as I mean to belong henceforth with my body and my immortal soul to Giulietta, whom I have chosen for my wife, and to whom, by a special vow, I shall bind myself forever.' ”

Erasmus felt a thrill through all his nerves ; fiery kisses were burning on his lips ; he had the paper which Giulietta gave him in his hand. Suddenly, Dappertutto rose gigantic behind Giulietta and handed him a metallic pen. At the same moment a small bloodvessel burst in his left hand, and the blood spurted out. “ Dip your pen in it ! ” croaked the scarlet man. “ Write ! write ! my ever, my only beloved ! ” lisped Giulietta. Already he had the pen in his hand and seated himself to write, when the door opened, a figure in white entered, and staring with spectral eyes at Erasmus called, with a muffled voice of pain, — “ Erasmus, what are you doing ? For the Saviour’s sake, desist from the awful deed ! ” Erasmus recognized his wife in the warning figure, and threw the pen and paper far from him. Lightning flashed from Giulietta’s eyes, her face was horribly distorted, her body glowed like fire. “ Let me go, hell-brood ! You shall have no part in my soul. In the Saviour’s name, get you gone, Serpent ! hell glows out of you ! ” cried Erasmus, and with a strong hand pushed Giulietta, who still clung to him, away. Then there was a yelling and howling in piercing discord, and a flitting, as with black raven wings, through the room. Giulietta and Dappertutto vanished in thick smoke and stench, which seemed to ooze from the walls and extinguished the lights. Finally, the beams of morning broke through the windows.

Erasmus betook himself at once to his wife. He found her quite mild and gentle. Little ’Rasmus was sitting

up in the bed, already wide awake. She gave her hand to her exhausted husband, saying, —

“Now I know all the bad that happened to you in Italy, and pity you with all my heart! The power of the enemy is very great; he is given to all possible vices, — and among others he steals, and could not resist the temptation maliciously to purloin your beautiful, perfectly-resembling, looking-glass image. Just look into that glass there, my dear good man!”

Spikher did so, trembling all over, and with a very piteous expression. The mirror remained bright and clear; no Erasmus Spikher looked from it.

“This time,” continued his wife, “it is well that the looking-glass does not reflect your image, for you look very silly, dear Erasmus. But you must be aware yourself that without a looking-glass image you are an object of contempt, and can never be a regular, complete father of a family, — one to inspire respect in wife and child. Little ’Rasmus already laughs at you, and means by and by to paint you a mustache with coal, because you never will know it. Therefore, go abroad again for awhile; go about in the world, and try to find a chance of getting back your looking-glass image from the Devil! When you have it, you shall be heartily welcome. Kiss me!”

Spikher did so. “And now, good luck to you! Send ’Rasmus now and then a pair of new trousers, for he creeps on his knees a good deal and wears them out fast. And if you happen to come to Nüremberg, you may add a gay leaden hussar and a gingerbread cake, like a loving father. Good-by, dear Erasmus!”

And she turned herself in bed and went to sleep. Spikher lifted little ’Rasmus and pressed him to his heart; but the child cried so that he set him down again, and went forth into the wide world. He once fell in

with a certain Peter Schlemihl, who had sold his shadow. The two thought of going into partnership; Spikher was to cast the necessary shadow, and Schlemihl to reflect the proper image. But nothing came of it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a criticism of Hoffmann from an English point of view, see "Foreign Quarterly Review" for 1827.



## CHAPTER XX.

HEINRICH HEINE.

GERMAN LITERATURE, confessedly poor in the attribute of wit as compared with the literatures of other nations, has yet one writer unsurpassed in that kind,—one whom, if Père Bouhours had foreseen, he would certainly have been forced to admit that “un Allemand peut avoir de l’esprit.” But Heinrich Heine, of whom I speak, was more French than German in his mental habitudes and style of discourse: of Germans, surely the most un-German. Among writers of all nations, he stands pre-eminent in the union of dissimilar and antagonistic traits,—sarcasm and genuine poetic feeling, Mephistophelism and lyric grace, the bitterest and the sweetest in mental life.

He was richly, variously gifted, but his one pre-eminent talent was wit,—wit of the French, more precisely of the Voltairian, type; wit born of cynicism, inspired by contempt; not innocently playful like that of Hood or Charles Lamb, not sportive for sport’s sake, but wit which like the lightning smites where it shines.

For some reason, perhaps because he delighted in abusing them, Heine has been a special favorite with the English. No German writer, according to the measure of his ability, has found such kindly recognition with precisely the people whom, of all European nations, he most detested. Matthew Arnold goes so far as to say that “on Heine, of all German authors who survived

Goethe, incomparably the largest portion of Goethe's mantle fell." And again: "He is the most important successor and continuator of Goethe in Goethe's most important line of activity,"—that is, as Mr. Arnold explains it, in "the liberation of humanity." This, it seems to me, is absurdly false. To say that a mocker, a *persifleur*, one whose favorite use of the pen was to bespatter some respectability; from whom it is so hard to get a serious word on any subject; who seemed to look upon the universe and life as a colossal farce,—to say that such a one has, of German authors next to Goethe, contributed most to the liberation of humanity, is to grievously mistake the forces and influences by which human nature is made free. Liberation comes, not by snarling at oppressors or grimacing at society, but by elevating the mind and enlarging the intellectual horizon. This, Goethe with earnest effort, promoting the culture which alone makes free, spent his life in doing. Only on an earnest, patient, reverent soul could his mantle fall. Heine was not of that sort; when he called himself a soldier in the war of liberation of humanity, he mistook the quarrel with existing institutions for real enlargement and soul-emancipation.

But let us take him for what he was, and prize him accordingly. If he contributed nothing essential to the liberation of human kind, and very little to their instruction, he has contributed immensely to their entertainment, and that after a fashion in which among Germans he has no rival.

Heine presents the second example of a born Jew attaining high eminence in German literature. Mendelssohn, as we have seen, was his predecessor in this distinction. But what a contrast, intellectual and moral,

between the two! Honest Moses gained his position by strenuous labor seconding native gifts and pre-eminent moral worth. Heine conquered it, in spite of moral defects, by audacious satire and the exquisite charm of his verse. Mendelssohn maintained through life, and adorned and enriched, his ancestral faith. Heine treated the confession of his fathers as a joke, and exchanged it as a matter of policy for the Christian; caring at heart as little for the Gospel as he had cared for the Law. To the monotheism of the Jews his satire ascribes the financial prosperity of his people. He says: —

“Israel is indebted for his wealth to his sublime belief in an invisible God. The heathen worshipped idols of silver and gold. Had they changed all that silver and gold into money and put it to interest, they too might have been rich like the Jews, who were shrewd enough to invest in Babylonian state loans, in Nebuchadnezzarian bonds, Egyptian canal-shares, in five per cent Sidonians, and other securities which the Lord has blessed.”

Heinrich, son of Samson Heine, was born on the 12th of December, 1799, in Düsseldorf, a town on the Rhine, since famous for its school of art. In 1805 the duchy was ceded to the French, and Düsseldorf came under the dominion of Joachim Murat. The French occupation lasted until 1813. By this means, Heine's boyhood, from his sixth to his thirteenth year, came under French influence, — a circumstance which fully explains the French leaning, so conspicuous in his character and writing. French became to him a second mother-tongue. In fact, to the people of that locality French rule was a great relief from the grinding oppression of their German masters. On the Jews especially, who in

these days were treated as outcasts, it conferred a social emancipation elsewhere denied, and Heine never ceased to remember with gratitude the régime to which his people owed this precious boon.

The boy received his early education in one of the schools established by the French, styled "lyceums," under the direction of head-master Schallmeyer, a priest of the Romish Church. Schallmeyer endeavored in vain to persuade Heinrich's mother to devote her son to the service of his Church, promising him swift promotion through his influence at Rome. Heine thinks his mother would have relented had she duly considered how becoming to him would have been an abbé's mantle or a cardinal's red hat. He has given in the "*Ideen*," published in 1826, a humorous account of the kind of teaching he received at this seminary, the trouble it cost him, and the use he made of it:—

"The kings of Rome, dates, nouns in *im*, the irregular verbs, Greek, Hebrew, geography, German, head-reckoning [mental arithmetic.],—Gott! my head still swims with it! Everything had to be learned by heart. A good deal of it in after years stood me in stead; for had I not known the kings of Rome by heart, it would later in life have been a matter of perfect indifference to me whether Niebuhr has proved, or has not proved, that they never existed; and had I not known dates, how could I have ever found my way about big Berlin, where one house resembles another like two drops of water or two grenadiers, and where one can never find his acquaintance if he has not the numbers of the houses where they live, in his head? I connected with every man of my acquaintance some historical event, the date of which corresponded with the number of his house, so that I could easily recall the latter by thinking of the former. The consequence was that an historical event came into my mind whenever I beheld one of my acquaintance. For example, if I met my tailor, I immediately thought of the battle



of Marathon; when I met the well-dressed banker, Christian Gumpel, I thought of the destruction of Jerusalem; my Portuguese friend, who was very much in debt, made me think of the flight of Mahomet. . . . As I said, knowledge of dates is absolutely necessary. I know people who have nothing in their heads but some dates, with which they knew how to find out the right houses in Berlin, and are now already full professors. But at school I had a terrible time with all those numbers. With arithmetic proper it was still worse. What I understood best was subtraction. In that there is a very practical chief rule: four from three I can't; I must borrow one. In such cases it is always best to borrow a few *groschen* more, for one can never know —

“As to Latin, Madam, you have no idea how complicated it is! The Romans would never have had time to conquer the world if they had had to learn their Latin. Those fortunate people knew in their cradles what nouns formed the accusative in *im*. I, on the contrary, had to learn them by heart in the sweat of my face. But still it is well that I know them; for when on the 20th of July, 1825, I had to carry on a disputation in Latin in the *aula* at Göttingen (Madam, you ought to have heard me), if I had said *sinapem* instead of *sinapim*, the Freshmen, who might have happened to be present, would have heard me, and that would have been an everlasting disgrace. *Vis, buris, sitis, tussis, cucumis, amussis, canabis, sinapis*, — these words, which have made such a figure in the world, owe their consequence to their having combined to form a class by themselves, although they were exceptions. On that account I honor them. And to have them in my mind, in case I should suddenly need them, has been a solace and a comfort to me in many a dark hour of life. But, Madam, the irregular verbs, which are distinguished from the regular by being accompanied with more blows, — they are awfully hard. Often I prayed that if it were any way possible, I might be enabled to remember the irregular verbs.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Condensed from the original.

"Of Greek I will not even speak, — it makes me too angry. The monks of the Middle Age were not altogether wrong when they maintained that Greek was an invention of the Devil. God knows the sufferings it has caused me. With Hebrew it was a little better, for I had always a great partiality for the Jews, although to this hour they crucify my good name. But after all I could not make as much progress in Hebrew as my watch, which has had much familiar intercourse with pawn-brokers, and thereby contracted many Jewish customs, — as for example, it would n't go of a Saturday."

One never knows how much precisely this jester means in what he tells us of his early life; but if we may credit his account of himself, he owed an important part of his education to a French drummer, Le Grand, who was quartered upon his parents when Murat took possession of the city: —

"Monsieur le Grand knew but a little broken German, — only the most important terms, *Brot, Kuss, Ehre*, — but he could make himself very intelligible on his drum. For example, if I did n't know the meaning of the word *liberté*, he drummed the 'Marsellaise,' and I understood him. If I was ignorant of the meaning of the word *égalité*, he drummed '*ça ira, ça ira — les aristocrates à la lanterne*.'" To teach me the meaning of the word *bêtise*, he drummed the 'Dessau March,' which, as Goethe reports, we Germans drummed in the champagne, and I understood him. He wanted once to explain the word *l'Allemagne*, and he drummed that all too simple elementary melody which one often at fairs hears played to dancing dogs, 'Dum, dum, dum.' I was angry, but I understood him. In the same way he taught me modern history. It is true, I did n't understand the words he used, but as he drummed while he spoke, I knew what he meant to say. At bottom, that is the best way to teach. The history of the storming of the Bastille, of the Tuileries, etc., is best understood when we know how they drummed on those occasions.

In our school epitomes we simply read : ‘ Their Excellencies the barons and counts and their ladies were beheaded ; their Highnesses the dukes and princes, and their respective duchesses and princesses, were beheaded ; his Majesty the king and her Majesty the queen were beheaded.’ But when one hears the ‘ Red Guillotine March ’ drummed, one comes really to understand it, and learns the why and the how. Madam, that is a wonderful march ; it went through the marrow of my bones when I first heard it, and I was glad to forget it. One forgets that sort of thing as one grows older. A young man nowadays has so much other knowledge to remember, — whist, boston, genealogical tables, acts of diets, dramaturgy, liturgy, carving of meats, — that really, rub my forehead as I would, I could n’t recall that tremendous air. But just fancy, Madam, not long ago I was sitting at table with a whole menagerie of counts, princes, princesses, lord chamberlains, court marshalesses, court governesses, keepers of the court plate, and whatever else those high domestics may be called ; and their sub-domestics were running behind their chairs and shoving the well-filled plates under their mouths : but I who was passed by and overlooked was sitting idle without the least exercise of my jaws, and I kneaded bread pellets, and from mere *ennui* drummed with my fingers, and all at once to my horror I found myself drumming the long-forgotten ‘ Red Guillotine March.’ What happened ? Madam, these people went on undisturbed with their eating, and were not aware that other people, when they have nothing to eat, suddenly fall to drumming, and drum very curious marches, supposed to have been long since forgotten.”

It is a noteworthy fact that the first book which Heine read with interest, the first which actually “ found ” him and mastered him was, “ Don Quixote.” The influence of this master-work on a nature so susceptible must needs have been, and evidently was, profound, indelible. It predetermined, perhaps, the direction of his genius, and inspired the comic-tragic tone which characterizes

all his writings. "Don Quixote" is the most tragic of comedies. It presents the universal tragedy of life on a comic ground. The child appreciates the tragic more keenly than the comic; the former appeals to the feelings, the latter to the understanding. The boy Heine, with the simple faith of childhood, accepted the narrative as historical, took everything seriously, and wept at the knight's mishaps as the undeserved misfortunes and cruel failures of a great and noble nature. The comic side dawned upon him later in life. In the "Reisebilder" he compares himself to Don Quixote: —

"It is true, my madness and the fixed ideas I had imbibed from those books were of the opposite kind to the madness and the fixed ideas of the 'La Mancha.' He wanted to restore the perishing age of chivalry; I, on the contrary, would finally annihilate all that has survived of that time. And so we labored with very different views. My colleague took windmills for giants; I, on the contrary, can see in the giants of to-day only boastful windmills. He looked upon leathern wine-sacks as mighty magicians; but I see in our modern magicians only the leathern wine-sacks."

When the boy had reached the age of sixteen, his father, who wished to make a merchant of him, sent him to Frankfort and had him placed as a clerk in a bank. But the situation did not suit him, and Frankfort was intolerable on account of the hard conditions to which Jews were subjected in that city, compelled to live by themselves in a narrow, close street, — a *Ghetto*, of which the gates were closed, preventing their egress on Sundays.

The experiment was renewed with more promising auspices at Hamburg, where Heine's uncle, Solomon Heine, a wealthy banker, gave him a position which but



for his invincible aversion to mercantile pursuits, would have opened to him a sure and easy road to wealth. For three years he struggled in vain against the bent of his genius, until his uncle, despairing at last of his success in that line, but willing still to befriend him, generously offered to defray the expenses of a university education, on condition that his nephew should study law, obtain a degree, and settle as a lawyer in Hamburg. For this it would be necessary that he should be baptized and profess the Christian religion, — a measure to which neither party saw any objection, and which the nephew subsequently adopted.

A year and a half, extending from the spring of 1819 to the autumn of 1820, was spent at Bonn, where he matriculated as a student of law, but devoted himself mainly to literature under the guidance of August W. Schlegel, the all-cultured scholar, who commanded his admiration and exercised an immense influence on the youth's intellectual development. From Bonn he removed to Göttingen, then holding the first rank among German universities. There he applied himself with more concentrated diligence to his legal studies, until, on account of a duel, he received what was called the *consilium abeundi*, — that is, in the language of our universities, he was suspended. We next find him a student at Berlin, where he gained the *entrée* to the most intellectual circle of the city, — the circle of which Varnhagen von Ense and Rahel were the leading spirits. In Berlin he heard Hegel, associated with the Hegelians, and imbibed the demoralizing influence of that philosophy, which in professing to explain all neutralizes all, and leaves a residuum of intellectual self-sufficiency combined with moral indifference.

To this evil was added a disappointment in love. A cousin, who first encouraged and then jilted him, ended with marrying one whom Heine characterizes as the stupidest of all fools. This experience, acting on such a nature, became a root of bitterness which poisoned all his life and aggravated the cynical tendency so conspicuous in his character and writings. It furnished the motive and material of his first volume of poems, — “Junge Leiden,” — which seems to have received but little notice at the time.

In 1824 he returned to Göttingen, and there completed his professional studies, and took the degree of Doctor of Laws in 1825. About the same time he received Christian baptism, and became a member of the Lutheran Church. So far as we can judge, this step was an act of policy, — conformity without conversion, confession without conviction; in short, a lie, and if so, through the injury to self-respect which must have attended it, a fresh step in moral degradation.

From that time until the year 1831 he resided chiefly in Hamburg. How far he succeeded, or whether he seriously applied himself to the practice of the profession which his uncle had so much at heart, I am unable to say. We know that the place was exceedingly distasteful to him, and he satirizes it without mercy as a city of Philistines. He says: —

“There are no villains, no Macbeths there, but the spirit of Banco [Banquo] rules. The manners are English and the table is angelic [*englisch*]. The people of Hamburg are great eaters. In the matter of politics, of science and religion, they entertain conflicting opinions, or no opinions at all; but in the matter of eating there is an edifying unanimity. Of the Jews who reside there, one party insists that grace should be said in Hebrew, the

other allows that it may be said in German; but both parties eat, they eat heartily,—they are of one opinion in that. . . . Hamburg is the native city of smoked beef, and the people are as proud of it as Mainz is of John Faust, or Eisleben of Luther. And indeed who would think of comparing the value of the art of printing, or the value of the Reformation, with that of smoked beef? The Jesuits dispute the two former, but even the most zealous Jesuits are agreed that smoked beef is an institution of great benefit to human kind. [The women of Hamburg, he thinks, are not particularly subject to the passion of love.] Cupid sometimes draws his bow at them, but either from awkwardness or love of mischief he aims too low, and so the dart hits the stomach instead of the heart.”

In 1826 appeared the first volume of the *Reisebilder* (“Pictures of Travel”), containing the “Harzreise,” the “Nordernei,” and the book “Le Grand;” in 1827 the second part, and soon after the third, containing the “Italy,” the “Baths of Lucca,” the “City of Lucca,” and the “English Fragments.” The volumes are interspersed with some of the author’s most delicious poems. The “Nordernei,”—letters from an island of that name, a favorite seaside resort,—is prefaced by a series of poems on the North Sea. Julian Schmidt says of the first volume:—

“Seldom has a book in Germany elicited such loud and universal interest. The differences of age and rank vanished before the mighty impression. Forward-striving youth were inspired by its drunken dithyrambics, and gray Diplomacy sipped with secret delight the sweet poison whose deleterious effects it did not for a moment forget. The ‘Reisebilder’ was the first free breath which succeeded a heavy sultry atmosphere. For the first time one heard in the midst of the night-phantoms, which the charnel-fancy of the Restoration-poets had presented us, loud, arrogant, soul-born laughter. A bold harlequin had leaped

into the midst of their raree-show, brandishing right and left his wooden sword, and by means of his antics exciting in the public that merriment which alone could dispel the gloom from their eyes. . . . The young relative of a wealthy house, who more perhaps through report than by personal experience has come to the conviction that all beauty is venal, changes his rôle every moment with the kindly student given to dreaming and lacrymose love. . . . The impression which this singular work made on all sides is partly due to the state of the time to which the form of the 'Reisebilder' was a new and surprising apparition. A petrified dogmatism, from which the substantial meaning had died out, had gradually become a burden to everybody; the empty phraseology of Romanticism had lost its interest; men longed for deliverance from the fetters of an authority which one could no longer respect."

Of Heine's prose works the "Reisebilder," as it is the earliest, so in a literary view it is the best. Written before he had made literature a profession, and was forced to write for bread, it is the freshest, the freest, the most thoroughly impregnated with the author's genius, if also stamped with his peculiar faults, — flashing with wit, rollicking with humor, here and there eloquent, often pathetic, occasionally coarse, bitter in its satire, unjust in its criticisms, full of prejudice, full of egotism, always piquant, never prosy.

The title imperfectly indicates the contents of the work. Pictures of travel, properly speaking, descriptions of places, people, and things, adventures by the way, constitute a comparatively small part of the volumes. The rest is occupied with alien matter, — criticisms, personalities, biographical reminiscences, satires. There is no coherence between the parts, and often no apparent motive in the transitions. In form the book might pass for, and perhaps was, an imitation of Sterne's



“Sentimental Journey;” but in substance it has nothing in common with the English original.

The opening chapter of the second part, entitled “Journey from Munich to Genoa,” furnishes an example of the abruptness common to both authors and at the same time of the humor peculiar to the German: —

“I am the most polite man in the world. I take credit to myself for having never been rude on this earth, where there are so many insufferable bores who will sit down by you and recount their troubles, or, what is worse, declaim their verses. With genuine Christian patience I have quietly listened to these inflictions without betraying by a look how my soul was wearied by them. Like a Brahmin doing penance, who gives his body a prey to vermin that these creatures of God may also have their satisfaction, I have held still and listened to the most hateful of human vermin, and my inward sighs were heard only by Him who rewards virtue.

“But even policy counsels us to be polite, and not to sulk in silence or to answer petulantly when some spongy councillor of commerce or dry cheesemonger seats himself by us and begins a general European conversation with the words, ‘Fine weather to-day, sir.’ You can never know under what circumstances you may meet one of these Philistines again, and he may then take bitter revenge on you for not answering civilly, ‘Yes, very fine.’ It may even happen, dear reader, that at Cassel, at the *table d’hôte*, you shall be sitting next him on his left, and he has the dish of browned carp before him, and it falls to him to help. Now, if he has a pique against you, he will pass all the plates to the right, so that when it comes your turn there shall not be even the smallest bit of tail left for you. . . . And to get no carp is a great misfortune, — next to the loss of the national cockade, perhaps the greatest. The Philistine who subjects you to this evil mocks you into the bargain; he offers you the sprigs of laurel which are left in the brown gravy. Alas! of what avail are laurels when you have no carp? And the Philistine blinks with

his little eyes, and giggles and lisps, 'Fine weather to-day, sir.' Ah, dear soul! it may even happen that you shall come to lie in some churchyard by the side of this Philistine; and then, when at the last day you hear the sound of the trumpet, and say to your neighbor, 'Good friend, will you have the kindness to lend me a hand and help me to rise; my left foot has fallen asleep, lying here so long,' you will suddenly perceive the well-known Philistine smile, and will hear the mocking voice, 'Fine weather to-day, sir.'"

The particular Philistine who provoked these jests was a native of Berlin, whom Heine met at Munich, and who was very indignant that Munich rather than Berlin should be styled the "Modern Athens." Sitting by the poet's side at table, he expatiated on the want of irony in the people of Munich. There the Berliner had the advantage of them,—irony being in his view a test of intellectual refinement, a synonym for Attic salt. "No!" he exclaimed, "they have good white beer here, but no irony." Nannerl, the neat barmaid, who happened to be passing at that moment and to catch the word "irony," of whose meaning she was entirely ignorant, confirmed the Berliner's assertion. "We have no irony, but we have every other kind of beer." Whereupon Heine caught her by the apron and explained: "My dear Nannerl, irony is not beer at all; it is a kind of thing invented by the people of Berlin."

On entering Italy he writes:—

"I find it convenient to refer my readers, once for all, to Goethe's Italian journey,—the rather that, as far as Verona, he went over the same ground through the Tyrol. . . . Goethe holds the mirror to Nature; or, better said, he is himself the mirror of Nature. Nature wanted to know how she looks, and she created Goethe. Even the thoughts, the intentions of

Nature he can mirror to us ; and a fervent Goethean, especially in dog-days, is not to be blamed if he is so surprised at the identity of the objects with their reflections that he even credits the mirror with creative power, with power to create like objects. A certain Herr Eckermann once wrote a book about Goethe, in which he quite seriously asserts that if the dear God, in creating the world, had said to Goethe : ‘ I have now finished. I have created everything but birds and trees. You would oblige me if you would create these trifles in my place,’ — Goethe would have created these animals and plants quite in the spirit of the rest of creation ; the birds with feathers, and the trees green.’ There is some truth in these words ; and I am even of the opinion that Goethe would have done better than the dear God himself, — and that, for example, he would more correctly have created Herr Eckermann also with feathers and green. It is really a mistake of creation that Herr Eckermann has no green feathers growing on his head ; and Goethe has endeavored to remedy this defect by procuring for him a doctor’s hat from Jena, and putting it on him with his own hands.”

Previous to his Italian journey, curiosity had led Heine to England. His observations on that country were published in 1830, with the title “*Englische Fragmente.*” The hatred he always felt toward the English does not seem to have been either augmented or abated by what he saw on English soil. Certainly not abated, for long after it declares itself with comic ferocity in the introduction to his “*Maids and Women of Shakspeare.*” After citing the anecdote of a good Hamburg Christian, who could never reconcile himself to the fact that Jesus Christ was a Jew, when he thought of the Jewish pedlers of Hamburg, with their long unwiped noses, he proceeds to say that he felt just so about Shakspeare :

“It makes me faint at heart when I consider that after all he was an Englishman, and belonged to the most repulsive

people that ever God in his wrath created. What a disagreeable people! what a comfortless country! How starched, home-baked, self-seeking! How *eng* [narrow]! how *Englisch*. A country which the ocean would long since have swallowed but for fear of the nausea it would cause!"

Heine's visit to England coincided with the brief ministry of George Canning, — a time favorable for his study of English politics and English institutions. His observations on men and things are often sagacious and his criticisms just, where they are not biassed by his implacable prejudices.

When he comes to speak of Wellington, he seems fairly to gnash his teeth at the man who conquered his soul's idol, Napoleon: —

"The man has the misfortune of having always been fortunate where the greatest men of the world were unfortunate. That is revolting, and makes him hateful. We see in him only the conquest gained by stupidity over genius. Arthur Wellington triumphs where Napoleon Bonaparte fails. Never was a man more ironically favored by Fortune. It seems as if she meant to expose his barren littleness by lifting him up on the shield of victory."

On one occasion, however, Heine tells us that he was driven to praise Wellington. It was when his barber, a Mr. White, was shaving him. This barber was a great radical, and complained bitterly of the oppression of the poor by the aristocracy. Against Wellington especially he raved like a madman, saying, — "Oh, if I only had him under my razor I would save him the trouble of cutting his own throat, as his countryman Londonderry did!" Heine says: —

"I was afraid that he might suddenly mistake me for the Duke of Wellington, and cut my throat. I sought to tone down



his violence and to pacify him. I appealed to his national pride. I represented to him that Wellington had advanced the glory of England; that he was only an innocent tool in other hands; that he too was fond of beefsteak; that he — Heaven knows what more I praised in Wellington while the knife was about my throat."

The first and second volumes of the "Reisebilder" were soon followed by the *Buch der Lieder*, — the "Book of Songs," — containing, besides the previously published "Junge Leiden" and the metrical portions of the "Reisebilder," the Romances, the Sonnets, "Die Heimkehr," "Lyrisches Intermezzo," and other miscellaneous pieces. A second volume, published many years after, contains the collection entitled "Romancero," and the "Letzte Gedichte." "Atta Troll; a Summer-night's Dream," and "Germany; a Winter's Tale," were published separately.

As a lyric poet Heine must always rank high, not only among German, but among all modern European, singers. His songs have that subtle, indescribable, inexplicable charm which we find in Goethe, in Uhland, in Beranger, and in Burns; but, above all, in some of Shakspeare's songs. There is in them a spontaneity which is lacking in many poets who far excel him in other qualities, — in fire and force, — as Schiller and Byron. There is a touch-and-go character, a fugitive grace, like the momentary flutter of a humming-bird about a honeysuckle. Their substance is of the lightest, airiest (I am speaking of the songs), — a fleeting thought arrested and crystalized in verse; the mood of the moment breathed in numbers, words coming unsought to embody a sentiment, — falling, as it were, accidentally into metrical cadence and just happening to rhyme: no appearance

of elaboration, no suggestion of conscious effort, — sometimes a vexatious looseness of versification. The test of merit in poems of this sort — very different from that of more artistic compositions — is popularity ; and never were songs more popular than Heine's. They have been to Germany what those of Beranger are to France. Many of them have been set to music. "All the composers of the Holy Roman Empire," says Schmidt, "have worked at them."

The following is a specimen, not of the grace, which is untransferable, but of the easy levity of these songs : —

" I 'm tossed and driven to and fro ;  
A few hours more and I shall meet her, —  
The maid, than whom earth knows no sweeter :  
Heart, my heart, why throbbs't thou so ?

" But the hours, they are a lazy folk ;  
Leisurely their slow steps dragging,  
Yawning, creeping, lingering, lagging, —  
Come, hurry up, you lazy folk !

" With hurry and worry I 'm driven and chased ;  
But the hours were never in love I judge,  
And so they conspire to wreak their grudge  
In secretly mocking at lovers' haste."

Characteristic is the blending of sadness and jest in one weird little piece, which I will not attempt to translate in verse. The poet bids his mistress place her hand on his heart : "Do you hear the knocking and hammering in that little cell ? There's a carpenter at work there making my coffin ; his hammering keeps me awake. Make haste, Master Carpenter ! finish the coffin ; then I shall sleep."

All Heine's poems — the longer pieces as well as the songs — have been translated into English by Alfred

Edgar Bowring. My space will permit me to select but two:—

#### THE MOUNTAIN ECHO.

At a sad slow pace across the vale  
There rode a horseman brave :  
“ Am I riding now to my mistress’s arms,  
Or but to the darksome grave ? ”  
The echo answer gave —  
“ The darksome grave.”

And farther rode the horseman on,  
With sighs his thoughts expressed:  
“ If I thus early must go to my grave,  
Yet in the grave is rest.”  
The answering voice confessed —  
“ The grave is rest.”

Adown the rider’s furrowed cheek  
A tear fell on his breast:  
“ If rest I can only find in the grave,  
For me the grave is best.”  
The hollow voice confessed —  
“ The grave is best.”

#### THE PILGRIMAGE TO KEVLAR.

The mother of God at Kevlar  
Her best dress wears to-day;  
Full much hath she to accomplish,  
So great the sick folks’ array.

The sick folk with them are bringing,  
As offerings fitting and meet,  
Strange limbs, of wax all fashioned, —  
Yea, waxen hands and feet.

And he who a wax hand offers  
Finds cured in his hand the wound;  
And he who a wax foot proffers  
Straight finds his foot grow sound.

To Kevlar went many on crutches  
Who now on the tight-rope skip,  
And many a palsied finger  
O'er the viol doth merrily trip.

The mother, she took a wax-light,  
And out of it fashioned a heart:  
"My son, take that to God's mother,  
And she will cure thy smart."

The son took, sighing, the wax heart,  
Went with sighs to the shrine so blest;  
The tears burst forth from his eyelids,  
The words burst from his breast:

"Thou highly favored, blest one!  
Thou pure and god-like maid!  
Thou mighty queen of heaven!  
To thee be my grief displayed.

"I, with my mother, was dwelling  
In yonder town of Cologne, —  
The town that many a hundred  
Fair churches and chapels doth own.

"And near us there dwelt my Gretchen,  
Who, alas! is dead to-day;  
O Mary, I bring thee a wax heart!  
My heart's wound cure, I pray.

"My sick heart cure, oh, cure thou!  
And early and late my vow  
I'll pay and sing with devotion, —  
O Mary, blessed be thou!"

The poor sick son and his mother  
In their little chamber slept;  
The mother of God to their chamber  
All lightly, lightly crept:



She bent herself over the sick one;  
Her hand with action light  
Upon his heart placed softly,  
Smiled sweetly, and vanished from sight.

The mother saw all in her vision, —  
Saw this, and saw much more;  
From out her slumber woke she, —  
The hounds were baying full sore.

Her son was lying before her,  
And dead her son he lay,  
While over his pale cheeks gently  
The light of morning did play.

Her hands the mother folded,  
She felt she knew not how;  
With meekness sighed she softly,  
“O Mary, blessed be thou!”

The French Revolution of 1830, — the revolution of the *trois jours*, — which dethroned Charles X., awakened in Heine, as in all German Liberals, a fever of enthusiasm, and brought to sudden maturity a project long entertained of emigrating to France, and there maintaining himself by his pen. It is surmised that this determination was confirmed by hints from the civil authorities, that in consequence of too great freedom of speech on political topics his residence was no longer safe at home. The prospect of confinement in the fortress of Spandau — the prison of political offenders — was not a pleasant thing to contemplate. He had been assured, he says in his quaint fashion, by one who knew from experience of the place, that there were flies in the soup, and that the keeper forgot to warm the prisoners' chains in the winter. Accordingly, in 1831

he removed to France; and there, with the exception of a visit to Germany, he remained, residing chiefly in Paris during the rest of his life.

But though he chose to expatriate himself, and though he delighted to abuse Germany and all that belonged to it, he could never bring himself to sever the tie which bound him to his native country; and when in great pecuniary distress, he refused tempting offers of lucrative posts in the civil service of France, from an unwillingness to break entirely with Germany by suffering himself to be naturalized as a French citizen. It is beautiful to see, beneath all his cynicism and vituperation, this latent love of the fatherland. It attests a redeeming trait in his character, — this, and his yearning, unconquerable affection for his mother in Hamburg. In the eight years' agony of his sick-bed he would never distress her with a knowledge of his condition, and explained the different manuscript of his letters by pretending a temporary weakness of the eyes, which obliged him to employ an amanuensis.

“ How swiftly speeds each rolling year  
Since I have seen my mother dear!  
Dear, dear old woman! with what fervor  
I think of her! may God preserve her!  
The dear old thing in me delights;  
And in the letters which she writes  
I see how much her hand is shaking,  
Her mother's heart how nearly breaking.  
My mother's ever in my mind;  
Twelve long, long years are left behind, —  
Twelve years have followed on each other  
Since to my heart I clasped my mother.  
For ages Germany will stand;  
Sound to the core is that dear land.  
For Germany I less should care

If my dear mother were not there.  
My fatherland will never perish,  
But she may die whom I most cherish." <sup>1</sup>

But the mother survived him.

In France Heine took to himself a wife. In 1836 we find him associated with a French grisette, whom he afterward married, — Mathilde Crescence Mirat, — and writing to his friend Lewald: "Mathilde cheers my life by the unvarying variableness of her humors. Very seldom do I now think of poisoning or asphyxiating myself. We shall probably put an end to ourselves some other way, by reading some book till we die of *ennui*." The union was a happy one; it supplied to the poet precisely what he most needed, — home comfort, relief from wearing mental toil, a refuge from the bitter conflicts of life, and a faithful minister in the weary years of sickness that ended only with death.

His wife was illiterate; she knew nothing except by hearsay of his writings, and naively asked his friends "if it was true that her Henri was a great poet." Intellectual sympathy was out of the question, but the little woman gave him what was far more important, — cheerful companionship, in which he could relax from his labor, a comfortable *ménage*, and tender nursing.

"My wife," he wrote to his brother, "is a good, natural, cheerful child. . . . She does not allow me to sink into that dreamy melancholy for which I have so much talent. For eight years now, I have loved her with a tenderness and passion which border on the fabulous."

A detailed account and critical analysis of Heine's writings on French soil, — some of them first written in

<sup>1</sup> From Bowring's translation.

French and afterward translated into German,— would be foreign to the purpose, and would far exceed the limits of this essay. The volume of essays entitled the “Salon” contains some very valuable criticisms of French painters, *à propos* to the Paris art exhibition of 1831, and a series of less important strictures on the French stage in letters to the author’s friend Lewald. It contains the “Florentine Nights” and the “Elementar-Geister” (an entertaining account of certain German superstitions), the “Rabbi Bacherach” (an interesting sketch of Jewish life drawn partly from personal observation), and the satirical fragment, “Schnabelewopski.” And it contains what is more important than any of these,— one of the most significant of all Heine’s works,— an essay on the history of religion and philosophy in Germany. It was first written in French, and was designed to give French readers some notion of that philosophy of which they had heard so much, and which was so inaccessible to them in the works of Kant and Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. This purpose was answered for such as required only general and superficial acquaintance with the subject; the serious student in pursuit of thorough knowledge must seek elsewhere. The book is superficial, as are all Heine’s writings; he was no metaphysician, no first-hand studious investigator of any subject. Like Voltaire, he had luminous intuitions but no depth. Yet it is beautifully intelligible, and readable as no other book on German philosophy is. It abounds in Heine’s peculiar wit, and in characteristic merit ranks, in my judgment, next to the “Reisebilder.”

I cannot speak with the same commendation of the author’s other work on Germany,— his dissertation on the Romantic School, which has been lauded by non-German



readers, ignorant of the writers treated, as the most valuable of all his productions. It was designed in part as a kind of antiphony to Madame de Stael's "*L'Allemagne*," as that was designed to set off Germany against the France of Napoleon's régime. It was written to suit French taste, and partly to vindicate French classicism. It deals in a flippant manner with great and honored names, is often grossly unjust, especially to A. W. Schlegel, to whom the author was indebted for much kindness while at Bonn, and whose merits he then exalted with extravagant praise. The book is entertaining, as a treatise of Heine on such a subject could hardly fail to be, but insincere. Let no one rely on it for any trustworthy knowledge of the German Romantic School.

The remaining works of Heine, apart from the grace of his style, have only a temporary and local interest, with the exception of the "*Maids and Women of Shakespeare*," which is certainly not one of his best, and which throws but little critical light on the works of the great dramatist.

In the essay on Ludwig Börne, a former friend of the author, — that essay so universally condemned, and afterward repudiated by Heine himself, — the second book is an episode consisting of letters to friends, in which there is an estimate of the Bible especially interesting as coming from such a source: —

"Yesterday being Sunday, and leaden tedium brooding over the whole island [*Heligoland*] and almost crushing in my head, in my despair I had recourse to the Bible. And I confess to you, that in spite of my being secretly a Hellene I was well entertained and thoroughly edified. What a book! great and wide as the world; having its root in the abysses of creation and reaching up into the blue mysteries of heaven! Sunrise

and sunset, promise and fulfilment, birth and death, the whole drama of humanity, — it is all in this book. It is the book of books. . . . Longinus speaks of its sublimity. Modern writers on æsthetics talk of *naïveté*. Ah! as I have said, here all standards of measurement fail. . . . The Bible is the word of God."

In 1848 Heine, already stricken with paralysis, was attacked with a disease of the spine, which laid him prostrate; and from that time until his death, in 1856, for eight long years, he was confined to his bed, suffering frightful pains the while, but retaining his mental vigor and vivacity to the end. One day a German scholar called to see him, and wearied him with his learned dulness. When he had taken his leave, Theophile Gautier called. "You will find me stupid to-day," Heine said; "I have been exchanging ideas with Herr ———." When near his end, his physician asked: "Pouvez-vous siffler [*siffler* means both "whistle" and "hiss"]?" "Hélas! non," was the reply; "pas même une comédie de M. Scribe."

Lord Houghton, who has written more sensibly about Heine than any Englishman whom I have read, embodies in his monograph a very pathetic account, which at his request an anonymous lady friend, whom the poet had met and petted as a child, gave of her visit to the invalid in what he called his "mattress-grave."

"He lay on a pile of mattresses, his body wasted so that it seemed no bigger than a child under the sheet which covered him. He raised his powerless eyelids with his thin white fingers and exclaimed: 'Gott! die kleine Lucie ist gross geworden, und hat einen Mann: das ist eigen!' On a second visit, some time after, he said: 'I have now made my peace with all the world, and at last also with the dear God, who now sends you to me as a beautiful death-angel. I shall certainly die soon.' On

the whole, I never saw a man bear such terrible pain and misery in so perfectly unaffected a manner. He complained of his sufferings, and was pleased to see tears in my eyes; and then he at once set to work to make me laugh heartily, which pleased him just as much. . . . He begged me not to tell him when I was going, for he could not bear to say ‘*Lebewohl auf ewig*,’ or to hear it. He repeated that I had come to him as a beautiful, kind death-angel, to bring him greetings from youth and from Germany, and to dispel the bad French thoughts.”

Thus Heine seems at last to have abjured his French predilections, reverting with a prodigal’s penitent yearning to the German Heimath, the home of his early culture and his first affections.

What shall we say in conclusion of this extraordinary genius? A great poet? The third in rank of the poets of Germany? No! To constitute a great poet there needs something more than a writer of songs, be they never so charming. There needs, as the name imports, the *maker*; and that Heine surely was not. For his tragedies, “*Ratcliff*” and “*Almansor*,” his warmest admirers have claimed no special merit; as dramatic compositions they are failures. His longer poems—with the exception of the “*Jehuda Ben Halevi*” (which is a fragment), his “*Deutschland*,” and “*Atta Troll*”—would hardly be read but for the fame achieved by his songs. Not a great poet, but a marvellous songster, and beyond comparison Germany’s wittiest writer,—the foremost satirist of his time.

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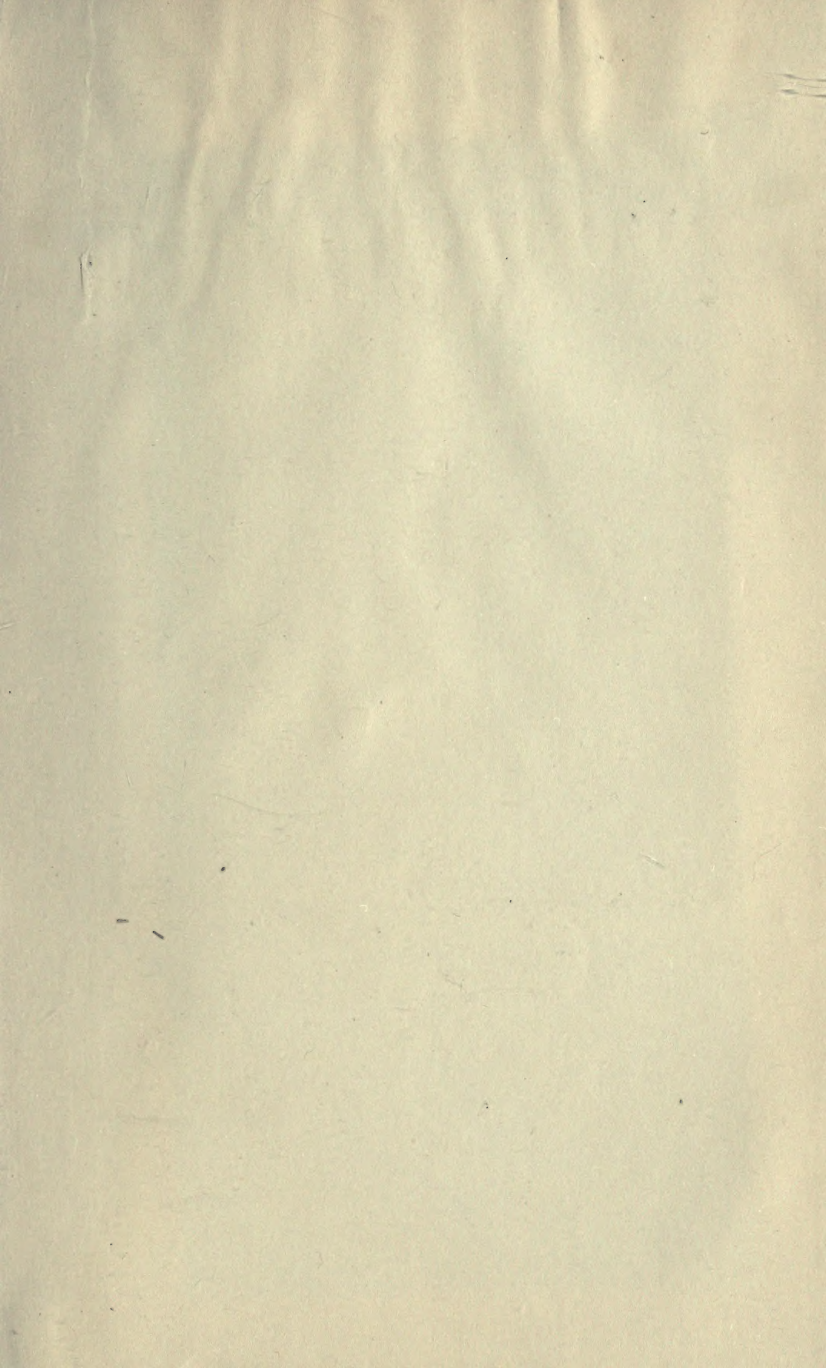
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